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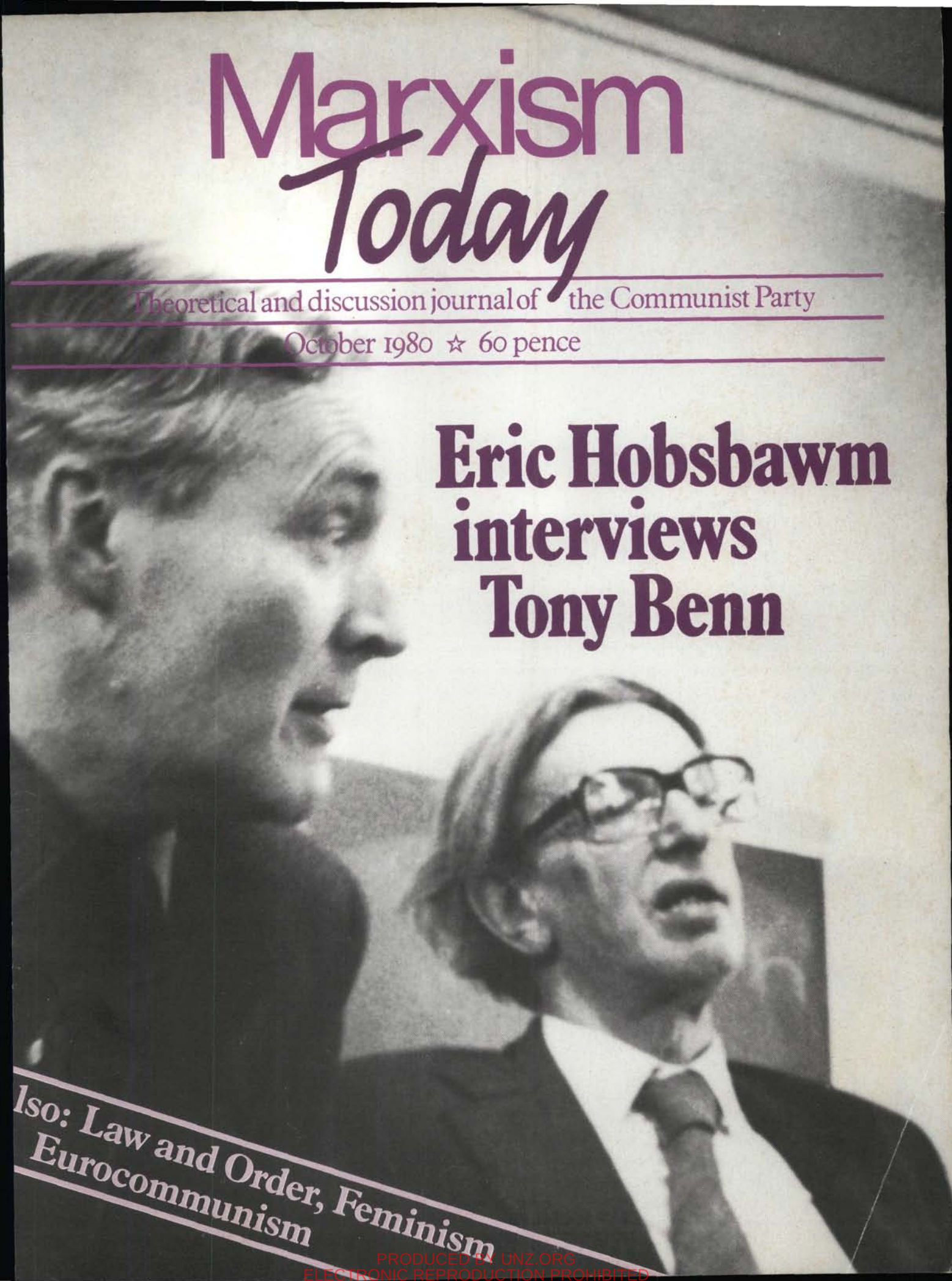

Eric Hobsbawm interviews Tony Benn

Also: Law and Order, Feminism, Eurocommunism

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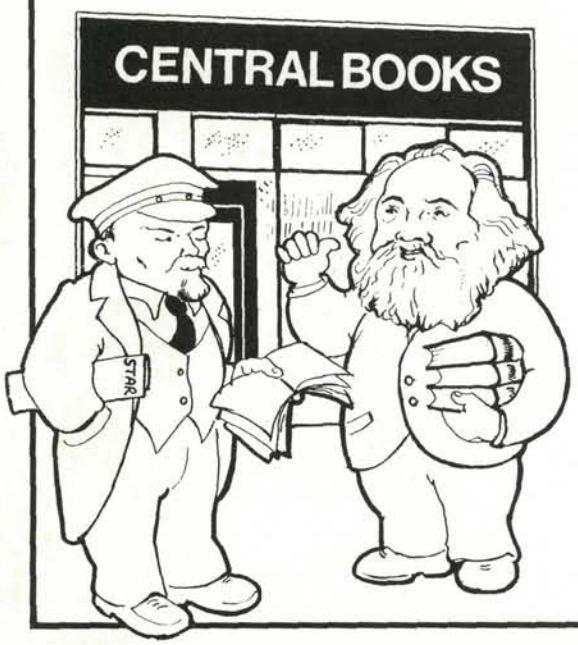

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FOCUS

MONETARISM GONE MAD

Treasury ministers may now be preparing a significant revamp of Tory economic policies. To general alarm at the accelerating collapse of production and employment in Britain has been added increasingly critical comment, even in the establishment press, on the two main symbols of Thatcherite economics, the 'money supply' and 'public borrowing'. Recent figures have made it clear that both the quantity of money and public sector borrowing are well above target and growing fast. Ironically, Sir Geoffrey Howe, a chancellor committed above all to financial stability, is now threatened with a serious loss of financial control. Thus the search is on for ways of modifying the Government's economic position while avoiding the political disarray which would follow anything that looked too much like a U-turn.

In all this, there's no question of the Tories abandoning monetarism. In practice monetarism as a broad political trend has two main elements: continuous deflationary pressure on employment and wages; and a sustained drive to contain and reduce public expenditure on welfare and social services. In this sense virtually every government in the West is now pursuing monetarist policies, as indeed did Jim Callaghan and Denis Healey during Labour's last five years in office. This kind of monetarism is in fact quite a coherent right-wing strategy — it uses unemployment in both public and private sectors to limit popular aspirations, while giving maximum scope to private employers to regroup and reorganise production on their own terms.

Where Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet is an exception to the rule is not in being monetarist but rather in failing to see the wide gap that must exist between monetarism as economic policy and monetarism as ideology. To put it another way, the Tories have committed the classical political error of believing their own propaganda. The pure doctrines of Milton Friedman have been applied to the letter — with highly embarrassing results.

The fashionable Conservative position on income tax cuts, for example, has left the budget in serious imbalance. As the recession gets deeper, tax revenues fall, while public expenditure, in spite of the cuts, expands with the number of unemployed drawing dole. Any further use of VAT to narrow the gap between revenue and expenditure will feed straight into higher prices, while the Tory line on 'incentives' rules out any major change in income tax. As a result public borrowing (which Mrs Thatcher swore to reduce) looks like being two to three billions higher this year than the Government had allowed for.

Again taking the works of Milton Friedman literally, the authorities have refused to meet the government deficit by borrowing from the banks ('increasing the money supply'). Instead they have attempted to borrow the missing billions on the open market, keeping interest rates at record levels and intensifying the financial squeeze on industry.

At the same time, high interest rates are drawing large amounts of foreign money into London, forcing up the exchange rate (which recently reached an almost unbelievable $2.40 to the pound) and making life impossible for British exporters.

The absence of logic in the whole process is indicated by its outcome: more and more revenue is needed simply to meet the interest payments on government borrowing — and so the original problem is intensified.

Perhaps the central mistake made by the Tory government was not to see that in the twentieth century even laisse-faire policies need to be carefully managed by the government. Looking only at the figures for money in circulation, ignoring the real structure of production, they gave the economy such a severe deflationary jolt through high interest rates as to compromise their entire economic strategy. Companies hit by the crisis are desperate for cash and running up huge overdrafts with the banks — this means that the 'money supply' increases even more rapidly while industry is saddled with record interest payments at a time when profits are hard to find.

Establishment impatience with 'incompetent' monetarism has been expressed in a recent series of articles by Anthony Harris in the *Financial Times*. Here deflation of the economy is of course taken for granted — but there are pained objections to policies which only succeed in deflating the economy by virtually eliminating profits in wide sections of industry. This, says the CBI, is definitely not what we had in mind.

Thus the search is on for ways of 'adjusting' monetarist policies — to make them more suitable instruments for achieving monetarist objectives. It is argued that the main burden should be carried by the 'household sector rather than the corporate sector'. In plain English, squeeze the people as hard as you like but leave British business some profits.

So far the main sign of a change in government attitudes is on public sector pay. Here it is clear that a comprehensive and rigorous — if undeclared — incomes policy has been implemented, which could lead to serious trouble this winter. But there are many other signs that shifts in policy are under active consideration.

An interesting example was the notion, recently canvassed in the press, of a big drive to tap small savings for the government's needs. It was suggested that in this way the government could reduce its competition with private industry for badly needed funds in the money market.

The difficulty with such ideas is political. In this case, for example, small savings would be directed to the government away from building societies. When mortgages became harder to obtain, the Tory commitment to

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home ownership would look somewhat academic.

Similar problems arise with other measures currently being discussed. Probably the easiest way to give some relief to manufacturing businesses would be to cut the prices they pay for fuel, energy and transport. But high prices in the nationalised industries are a key component in Tory financial strategy — without them it would be even harder to avoid raising income tax.

Again, it would not be difficult in principle to cut interest rates as a way of injecting resources into private industry. But any such move is likely to lead to a weakening of the exchange rate as foreign money is pulled out of London. This would be welcome to most businessmen, but it would raise the general cost of imports in a way that would start to make Tory promises on inflation highly unrealistic.

The signs, then, are that the Government is facing a dilemma. To restore coherence and direction to its economic strategy (even from a monetarist point of view) serious shifts in policy are required. But the same changes will compromise political commitments central to the Tory position — commitments on inflation, on home ownership, on tax cuts. The Left should be ready to take full advantage of these troubles in the enemy camp.

ITALY AFTER BOLOGNA

Recent months have seen two very important events in Italian political life: the June administrative elections and the fascist massacre at Bologna in August.

So far as concerns the administrative elections, which involved almost the whole country, the overall result was favourable to the Left. The PCI, with 31.5% of the vote, halted the decline which had appeared between 1977 and 1979, and in some important areas of the country even succeeded in reversing this trend and surpassing the 1976 results. This was seen particularly in the large industrial city of Turin, and, in the south, in Naples and Taranto (a city with a strong working class).

Side by side with these positive aspects, however, there was the PCI's loss of votes in almost the whole of the south, which is the most backward part of the country, where there was a worrying shift to the right.

A consequence of the vote is to confirm the PCI as the governing force and decisive voice of the strongest, most developed areas of the country, demonstrating that the electoral results of 1976 were not some isolated anomaly but could in fact be repeated and even improved — provided, obviously, that the policies of the PCI are understood and supported by the popular masses.

The other important aspect of the vote is the failure of Christian Democracy, which had projected itself with a decidedly right-wing line and with the ambitious design of ousting the PCI from the government of the main cities and regions.

The Christian Democrats lost around 3% of the vote compared with the 1979 General Election and was not able to alter the governments of any of the cities and regions which the Left had gained in the previous administrative elections. Even though the Christian Democrats remain the first party in Italy (36.8% of the votes), they have however, clearly failed in their attempt to launch themselves as a great neo-free trade political force capable of consolidating a position at the centre of the Italian social and political system, and to represent there, at a higher level, the needs and new culture of the ruling classes.

On the contrary, after the elections, the governmental crisis of the country has become more acute and the problems of a fundamental change in the nature of the ruling class remains more than ever the central problem of Italian political life.

It is in this situation of uncertainty and absence of leadership that we have, after some years, the reappearance of fascist terrorism and the terrible slaughter at Bologna railway station. The massacre unfortunately does not appear as some isolated act of madness but represents, more probably, the beginning of a political plan aimed at subverting the democratic institutions in a short space of time.

The situation, therefore, is very serious and also, unlike 'red' terorism which also of course presents a grave threat to Italian democracy, fascist terrorism never acts in Italy on its own spontaneous initiative, but appears always as part of a wider design, of a political scheme for which the 'brain' is not to be found in terrorist groups, but elsewhere.

The reappearance of fascist terrorism in such a serious form (and we must not forget that, again, unlike 'red' terrorism, it does not aim to *arouse* any sympathetic movement among the masses but aims instead to *paralyse* their reactions) points to the existence of a plan for an autocratic solution in Italy which certainly has its 'brain' in important sectors of the ruling class, of the state and probably in the secret services, both in Italy and of other countries.

In this situation the present government appears incapable of any serious initiative or control and in the field of economic policy, faced with firm opposition by workers, it has been obliged to withdraw many of its measures during the summer period, whilst other provisions of a restrictive nature are still blocked by the successful action of the PCI in Parliament.

At present, the PCI is putting up a stiff opposition, but this is proportional to the nature of the crisis and is aimed at building the conditions needed to overcome it. These are:

(1) to strengthen the unity of left wing forces, primarily the PCI and PSI, and of those forces with wide sectors of the productive middle classes and the Catholic world;

(2) to defeat the right wing line of the present Christian Democrat leadership;

(3) to bring forward more and more the working class as the leading class, that is as the class positively capable, in present day conditions in Italy and abroad, of showing the country as a whole the way out of the economic and moral crisis which threatens to suffocate it.

In a situation like this it is not surprising that the Italian Left, and the PCI in particular, experienced the recent events in Poland with a great sense of participation and much sympathy, finding confirmation, in those dramatic events, of the possibility and the necessity for the working class everywhere to assume the role of protagonist in the defence of democracy and the construction of socialism.

Translated by Ian Twigg

ILEA

The rumbling Tory campaign to break up the Inner London Education Authority has finally gone public.

It all started in 1978 when Sir Horace Cutler, leader of the then recently elected Tory Greater London Council launched an enquiry into his pet hate, ILEA, chaired by Sir Frank Marshall. Unfortunately for Sir Horace, Sir Frank took his brief seriously and concluded on rational and strategic grounds that inner London's unified education service should stay albeit with some political changes.

The advent of the Tory government presaged the new and most recent chapters. Stuart Sexton, ex-GLC Councillor and ally of Sir Horace, became political adviser to Mark Carlisle, Secretary of State for Education, and within months first Wandsworth and then Westminister Tory Borough Councils made 'spontaneous' calls for education in their areas to be handed over from ILEA to

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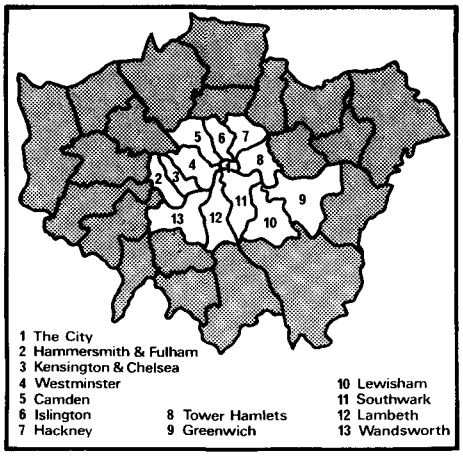
them. Shortly afterwards Mark Carlisle asked a group of London Tories under the chairmanship of Kenneth Baker MP to report to him on the future of ILEA.

Without seeking evidence from any responsible body, the Baker Committee predictably proposed ILEA should be broken up and education given to the inner London boroughs; but in a report which so obviously had been argued from its con clusions to its supporting 'evidence', ignoring all contrary fact, it rapidly became discredited. The latest stage thus emerged with Carlisle setting up a Ministerial Working Party, comprising Baroness Young, Minister of Education, together with Ministers from the Treasury and the Department of the Environment, to 'examine the local government arrangements for the provision, administration and financing of education' with the implicit threat that legislation may follow in November to break up ILEA.

Greater London Council area and boroughs within ILEA



ILEA runs the education service in the 12 inner London boroughs and the City of London. It is unique in both its size and in being the only education-only local authority in the country. Elsewhere county or local councils, responsible for a variety of services, run education. ILEA's creation arose out of a long fight in the early sixties to keep the then London County Council Education Service unified when the LCC was broken up between the boroughs and the GLC. The success of that campaign against the then Tory government retained a system which was and is unparalleled in the country for its diversity and extent of provision. However a number of Tories have been less than happy with the retention of this Labour stronghold both because of its control of education in the few boroughs that are otherwise Tory controlled and because its level of provision not only gives inner London a high level of service but acts as a national leader and innovator which other authorities aspire to match.

The fragmentation of inner London's education between the 12 inner London boroughs would destroy the capacity to maintain this level of provision in two ways. First it would end the redistribution of rates between the rich and poor areas achieved by ILEA's common rate levy on the whole area. This achieves a much higher level of redistribution according to need than the rate equalisation scheme and, given that only 2 boroughs (covering the West End and City) provide 52% of ILEA's rate income whilst the other 10 provide 48%, the poor boroughs would face a massive cut in service or up to a doubling of their rates.

Secondly, it would do away with what Sir Frank Marshall in his report recognised as the ability 'to provide expensive special services at a low unit cost for which smaller authorities and most inner London boroughs would never have the marginal capacity. This, of course, means that ILEA is all the better able to provide a service and offer a lead to the rest of the country . . .' The facilities under threat include the multitude of special schools for different handicaps, rural sports and other specialist centres, the wide range of in-service training and advisory staff, different resources centres, special courses and help for children with particular gifts or problems as well as a range of professional and technical support staff.

The campaign against the break-up of ILEA has already scored a significant success and from its beginning has had a strong consumer leadership. First in the field were the parents of Wandsworth who, together with local teachers, have waged a very effective campaign against both the local council and wider proposals for ILEA break-up. Campaigns built around parent, teaching and non-teaching staff support, and in some areas the trades councils, have subsequently sprung up in nearly all other parts of inner London whilst all eight major unions representing teaching, administrative, manual and technical staff have come together through the South East Region of the TUC to form an unprecedented united campaign. The Young Committee has been flooded with objections outnumbering support for the break-up, in the ratio of ninety to one.

The strength of the campaigns has been their ability to identify simple issues. The arguments of additional bureaucracy and other loss of efficiency as well as loss of services, lowering of standards and disruption has enabled a strong appeal for support from consumers and ratepayers. The fact that the campaigns have not been merely defensive but have adopted aims of improving both the quality of provision and participation of local interests in the democratic control of education has also strengthened their position. Undoubtedly the broad appeal of such arguments, which extends to Tory supporters and Tory Party members, has been influential on Tory local representatives, MPs and others who have come out against the break-up and led to the recently strengthening indications that the Young Committee may not propose a straightforward break-up of ILEA.

It is likely, however, that proposals will be put forward to manipulate political and financial controls with the aim of cutting expenditure and the enhanced level of education provision in inner London. A possible mechanism for this may be central government interference in determining levels of spending which may equal or go beyond the erosion of local government democracy in the recent Local Government Planning and Land (No 2) Bill.

The campaigners for ILEA now face their stiffest test in maintaining the breadth of support built up around the break-up issue to defend the quality and extent of education provision against this more subtle attack. If the campaign succeeds it could be an important opportunity to carry the opposition to public service cuts out of a relatively narrow base amongst labour movement organisations and their allies and into a much broader spectrum of society. The growth of such developments are essential in London and elsewhere if the increasingly dominant Tory attitude towards public services of being minimal activities necessary for social and economic order is to be challenged and the tide of opinion turned back towards a concept of them being an essential part of extending opportunities and the quality of life for all. Equally the campaign may need to succeed in generating public concern about the Government's insidious undermining of local democracy and centralising of control as shown in the Local Government and Land (No 2) Bill. If the Government attempts to apply further similar sanctions directly against ILEA to cut spending the local campaigns' existing support for maintaining and extending local democracy linked with its consumer/union concern about loss of service and jobs may well provide a strong base to generate public understanding and opposition to any government attempt to remove further power from local people to determine the level of their local spending on their own local services.

Contributors: **John Grahl, Piero Borghini, Mike Clayden**

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Eric Hobsbawm interviews Tony Benn

Eric Hobsbawm Well, first, it's a great pleasure, of course, to have you here. I would just like to say that I don't see this meeting of ours either as a confrontation or as an equal dialogue. I see my function rather as that of drawing you out, possibly pinning you down, chiefly because your reactions to the questions we are about to discuss are of considerable public interest, in view of your position in politics.

I would like to begin by saying that those of us who have been around a long time tend to have a sense of *déja vu*. We are back again in a period of a major crisis of world capitalism, combined with a very dangerous international situation and this is, of course, the general setting within which the specific and very grave problems of Great Britain, the British economy and British politics are being played out.

The first thing I'd like to ask you is how do you see this present world capitalist crisis and the present international situation. How would you compare it with the last time round?

Tony Benn By way of introduction, may I explain that I am not a Marxist, academic or historian, but a practising politician trying to understand what is happening. I too am struck by the similarities between the situation now and the situation in the 1930s, in that, as far as this country is concerned, we are locked into a virtual collapse of our industry which has proceeded more rapidly than people expected and which has been coming for some time. It is a decline beginning at a lower level of activity than we had in the 1930s. It's part of a world capitalist crisis which is at the moment also deepening with 8 million unemployed in the United States and about 7½ million in the EEC.

It looks at the moment as if the Government, far from trying to revive the British economy, is using this crisis in order to secure certain very clear political objectives. Namely, if possible the destruction of trade union power in the land by three processes: by stimulating unemployment to frighten working people away from trade unionism; by legislation through the Employment Bill to make effective trade unionism very difficult, if not impossible; and by the utilisation of the media in a very sustained campaign to persuade the British public that the trade union movement is responsible for our problems and has got to be weakened if we are to recover from them. It would also be true to say that in this slump we have a government that no longer has a patriotic element in its capitalism and actually sees a future for the people they represent in the success of international capitalism even at the expense of the United Kingdom becoming the sort of Northern Ireland of the Common Market.

On the other hand, the trade union movement is much stronger than it was in the 1930s in terms of numbers. Also, a lot of people are clearer in their own mind about what is happening. The option of war as a solution to the problem of the slump has been rendered absurd, though not impossible, because of the development of nuclear weapons, and I think these factors make the situation slightly different.

I must just add one other point. If you look at the defeat of the Labour government in May 1979, the more I think about it, the more I think it was a surrender rather than a defeat. For 20 years non-political trade unionism had been preached and it's turned out to be a cul-de-sac, and non-socialist Labourism had been preached, and it's also turned out to be a cul-de-sac. One could argue that Mrs Thatcher and the Conservative Party won last year, with very little opposition to the ideas that she preached. Much of the ground had been conceded before the election. But the crisis bears very strong resemblances to what happened in the 1930s. Indeed, what we are witnessing is an attempt to use this crisis to put the clock back to a much earlier period.

EH I think one might disagree with you about whether it was a defeat or a surrender, but we can return to that in a moment.

One point on which I think I would like to push you a little further. It seems to me that in this crisis, both in the world as a whole and in Britain, it is also to some extent a crisis of the political and social structures which have grown up during the period of capitalist expansion, in the long and short term. During the last crisis this took the form of fascism. In the present crisis it probably does not. But is there an analogy? An analogous expression of difficulties, tensions, breakdowns in the traditional political and social structures of the old established Western countries and particularly Britain?

TB Yes I think there is. But this problem is not confined to the Western world. One could argue that the industrial development of

The discussion between Eric Hobsbawm and Tony Benn took place at Birkbeck College on 15 July. It was organised by the Departments of History and Politics of Birkbeck College. We express our thanks to Professors Bernard Crick and Roderick Floud for their assistance.

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technology as it has been applied, particularly military technology, has centralised power in both Eastern and Western societies, and that if we are talking about the crisis of political structures we must also include the crisis of bureaucratisation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

I think that one could reasonably argue that in no major country in the world is the government absolutely certain that it carries the consent of its own people. For as society becomes more interconnected and hence more vulnerable, the pressure for central power and central control gets stronger. To this extent I would argue that a democratic socialist challenge would be a challenge to all existing power structures, both in Eastern Europe and in Western Europe. And to the extent to which the state has become bureaucratised, the trade unions have become incorporated, and the whole labour movement has become incorporated in a declining consensus that is becoming more authoritarian. Part of the crisis lies in the fact that people have lost their confidence in the power of the state to solve the problem in a way that would preserve their independence and their freedom and liberty.

There are a lot of parallel crises going on at the same time and that is why I think we have to look at them not only in terms of a socialist analysis, but also in terms of a direct sustained democratic challenge everywhere in the world to the secretive exercise of centralised power working through bureaucracy. This is what gives an added dimension to the argument, in respect both to the development of capitalism and the development of communism.

EH You said that the trade union movement today is stronger than it was, say, in the 1930s. That may be so. But would you say that on the whole the socialist movement, the democratic movement, the people's movement, have shown themselves to be strong enough to mount an effective challenge, both to the crisis itself, and to the forces such as Thatcherism, which it has brought out?

TB If you mean 'have we yet succeeded in building a winning coalition of people who understand what is happening and recognise the role of trade unionism and socialism in preventing the disaster from overwhelming us?' No, clearly we have not. If you mean 'is there a residual strength and a potential strength in the instruments of democracy, the instruments of trade unionism and the ideas of socialism, capable of being mobilised and developed to prevent this from reaching its ultimate form of repression?' I think the answer must be Yes. Otherwise I would be wholly pessimistic about the prospects.

This is what I meant by 20 years of surrender. Since 1959, the parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party at top level has been going along with the idea that the post-war consensus, built upon full employment and the welfare state, was a permanent feature of life in Britain and that trade unionism would be brought into a position where it helped to run it. That response has failed to command the support of our people because they have seen first, that it did not contain within it any element whatsoever of transformation, and secondly, that even by its own criteria it failed. That policy could not bring about growth, it could not extend freedom, it could not even maintain let alone develop welfare and it could not sustain full employment. The turning point came when, in 1976, the IMF simply dictated to a Labour government full of social democrats ordering them to abandon even social democracy. That was the background of failure but the potentiality of strength is still there. If I didn't believe that I would give up hope altogether, which I see no reason whatever to do.

EH You talked of residual and potential strength. Do you mean to say that you are thinking of this in terms of mobilising forces which were once mobilised and can be mobilised again or of discovering newer and wider forces which can be mobilised?

TB Both. If you look back at 1945, which was the first election that I was active in, although I did distribute Labour literature 10 years earlier, the amazing thing was the extent to which we were able to mobilise young and old, left and right, men and women, Scots, English and Welsh, the trade union members and the Labour Party. We mobilised a huge body of opinion in favour of a clear policy of reform. I know these were modest reforms by modern standards, amounting to little more than the final fruition of the radical ideas of the 1906 government, amplified by a bit of Fabianism, a bit of Churchill in his various Liberal-Conservative roles, and a bit of Macmillan with his *Middle Way*. But we mobilised a powerful combination committed to change. Unfortunately that spirit escaped and evaporated during the period of successive Labour governments after 1951.

EH May I stop you for a moment. You have talked about the 1945 government. In your Guildhall lecture[1] you talked of Attlee's as a social and socialist revolution. Are you talking about the same thing?

TB Yes — because there are two ways of looking at the 1945 government. One is to look at it in the way in which I tried to answer your question: is it possible to mobilise a wide range of people who will clearly support major change? Secondly, did the 1945 government achieve a real social revolution? The answer to that is that at the time, and compared to the slump of earlier years in terms of what it was able to achieve, it was. But when you analyse it, with the benefit of hindsight, you can see that it was also in a sense the final fruition of a liberal and radical tradition: though that isn't to say it wasn't a very significant turning point for Britain in the mid century because it was. But it would not be adequate to go back to 1945 policies now and argue that they would suffice for the next time round, because the nature of the crisis we shall inherit, whenever we win the next election, will in many ways be much more fundamental than Attlee had to face in 1945. For our industry will have been destroyed, we will have a lot of long-term unemployed, and the economy will be in a much much weaker state even than it was in 1945.

EH But surely we can't go back to 1945. I mean 1945 was, as it were, at an earlier phase of the development of the labour and democratic movement. One of the things that has often struck me, perhaps it has also struck you, is that the curve of Labour Party support starts off with 1900 and goes on, with a slight interruption in 1931, up to 1951 with the Labour Party becoming increasingly not merely the party of the working class, but also to some extent the inheritor of the wide popular coalition both of the other nationalities of this country, of intellectuals, the workers and others. This went on until the early 50s, and from then on it seems to me there has been a gradual erosion and the problem for us is how we can halt and reverse this erosion. There seemed to be a brief moment in the middle 60s when it looked as though the tendency was going to be reversed. It hasn't yet been. It has gone on being eroded. And to call for a return to 1945 seems hardly adequate.

TB I am not saying we should. I was trying to answer your question — is it possible to mobilise wide and residual forces and new forces — and I said it had been done in 1945 for a programme that was appropriate for that period. That task has been achieved once and can be achieved again. The policies to which we will have to attach support next time will be much more radical because events will

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require them to be much more radical than they were in 1945. But don't romanticise the 30s. In 1935 there were 3 million unemployed, yet only 150 Labour MPs were elected to Parliament. To suppose that there was a steady rise in support during the 30s and that 1945 was inevitable in terms of the public response we received would be to romanticise it. As you know, in 1945 Herbert Morrison did not even want all that public ownership, and it was an amendment moved at the annual conference by Ian Mikardo which carried, that eventually led to the wide extension of public ownership. We must be very clear that even in 1945 there were people in the Labour Party, because I remember meeting some of them myself, who spoke about the continuation of the wartime coalition in response to Churchill's appeal. These things didn't happen inexorably, they happened because there was a form of socialist, democratic and activist leadership given at a critical moment.

Now the question is can we mobilise that again? The answer is we must. Because if we can't, then we are going to be locked into a permanent minority position while enormous damage is done to our

society and maybe we could witness the destruction of our world community. So we have to work for the recreation of that sort of wide alliance attached to relevant policies which must be much more radical in socialist terms, and have a much bigger democratic dimension, than they had in 1945.

EH Well, I'm happy to hear that you don't believe that this is inevitable, I don't either. But nevertheless this brings us to the next question I want to put to you. This is to what extent the weaknesses and failures of the labour movement have aided this erosion of support, this gradual decline of support, and indeed the failure, even after a year of the present government, for the movement, and I would say for the people as a whole, to recover the confidence in Labour that it should have. Now to what extent would you make the record of the various Labour governments between 1964 and 1979 responsible for this?

TB You know that I served in every Labour government from 1964 to 1979, and take my full share of responsibility for that. But it would be very foolish to deny that a very heavy responsibility for what occurred, occurred as a result of the upper direction of the Labour Party over this whole period. That's why I mentioned the concept of surrender. Ideologically and tactically there have been over the last 30 years three waves of revisionism in the Labour Party.

The first was the Gaitskellite wave where he argued, in broad agreement with Macmillan, that you could rely upon full employment and it could sustain the welfare state without socialism. Every worker could have a mini in the garage, a television set in his living room and a package holiday in Majorca. Political trade unionism was no longer needed, and socialism was old hat. This revisionism was presented as Labour's response to Macmillan's 1959 victory. That was the first wave of revisionism and it took the form of a deliberate theological attack upon Clause 4 and was defeated, partly because the trade unions would have had to have had special conferences to change their own constitutions, many of which themselves included a version of Clause 4, which would have been a bit of a nuisance.

The second wave of revisionism occurred during the 1960s when Harold Wilson came to the conclusion that the trade unions were an embarassment to the Labour government because the Labour government was hoping to rise above its past as a product of trade unionism and present itself to the country as the natural party of government strong enough to govern the country even when opposed by the trade unions.

The third wave of revisionism, which is the one that is now being vigorously resisted, is a revisionism based upon a coalition at the very top of some of the parliamentary and trade union leadership to control the rank and file of the movement as reflected at Conference. This third wave of revisionism is the most comprehensive of all because it is a revisionism designed to consolidate, within the structures of the labour movement, an acceptance of the ideas of incorporation that were really defeated in May 1979. If that revisionism is accepted then we are finished. But it cannot, and will not, be accepted. That is why the argument is now focused primarily on the internal democracy within the Labour Party. If we lost that battle, then the whole history of the labour movement would have culminated in a mere Cape Canaveral rocket launching function whose sole job would be to fire the parliamentary leadership into orbit whenever there is a general election and, having discharged its function, the Labour Party like the first stage of the rocket would fall harmlessly into the Atlantic. That is not an acceptable role for the labour movement.

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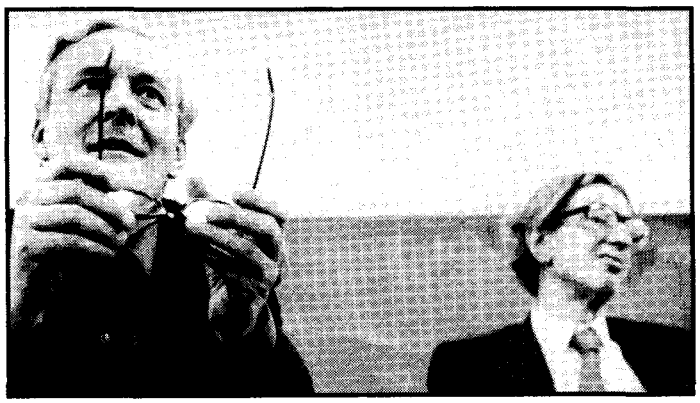
EH One might have other criticisms of Wilson than the one you make. Wilson was I think very nearly the worst thing that has happened to the Labour Party, including MacDonald, because he didn't even have the decency to leave it. I do think that there was more wrong with the Labour government in the 1960s than you suggest. One of the things is that they didn't do anything, they didn't propose to do anything. Reading the 1964 election manifesto, there was a great deal about the white heat of technology which a lot of people believed, you yourself were not immune to this belief, and, of course, in some sense it was perfectly real, but there wasn't anything else. And, in fact, all the sorts of things which you might have expected a Labour government to do, bringing up to date the reforms of 1945 to 1951, were not done.

TB That is a fair criticism. I don't think it was due to Wilson alone or Gaitskell alone or any single group of leaders. It was a collective development of revisionist thought which had become accepted in the Labour Party: the belief that full employment was permanent and that an expanding welfare state could always be financed by continuing full employment, and that the fine tuning of the mixed economy by a Labour government would always generate enough wealth and this could be redistributed in a rather more humane way so that Labour governments working on that basis could progressively



remove the inequalities and injustices of capitalism. There is no doubt that was the philosophy. If you read Harold Wilson's Conference speech on the white heat of technology it wasn't quite as naive as it's been made out. His argument about the white heat of the technological revolution was an expression of his belief that socialism had been made more relevant by science. He was also arguing that scientific change would have a serious effect upon people's lives who would then have to be protected. He was saying that the white heat of technology was something that burned people and therefore Britain would have to restructure and reorganise its industry and society in order to protect people from it.

But having said all that, it is also true that in 1966, when Labour won a majority of 100 in the Commons which consolidated its narrow election victory of October 1964, there was a complete reversal of engines and a return to absolutely traditional Treasury policies, followed later by an attack upon the power of the trade union movement, which could not otherwise be contained within that sort of a policy for administering capitalism. That policy, plus Labour government support for America's Vietnam war and various other decisions, did produce a collapse of support for the Party. Individual membership virtually halved, from 800,000 to 400,000 in those years.

EH The membership?

TB Yes, the membership, the individual membership of the Labour Party. That was a measure of the disenchantment. But I wouldn't attach it to one man. Everyone of us who were involved must share responsibility for that.

EH Well, that brings me to another aspect of it which does involve you since you are part of the Labour left. Both the Labour left and also perhaps non-Labour left had their responsibilities for it, the Labour left particularly. What, in those years of Labour government, should the Labour left have done that they didn't do, what did they do that they shouldn't have done?

TB That is a very good question because it touches on the crucial power that a Labour government has when in office: namely the power to call upon the loyalty of the Party to support it on the grounds that a Tory government which would succeed it if it was defeated, would be much worse than what the Labour government was doing whatever it did. This appeal to loyalty, which was a perfectly understandable appeal, can however be carried to the point where the role of Labour MPs, and the role of the Party may be reduced to the recording of a succession of votes of confidence.

Let me express this dilemma in personal terms, because that was the way in which I experienced it: the question of whether someone should stay in a Cabinet with which he was in disagreement. I thought about this very carefully, particularly during the 1975-79 period. I put the choice to my local Party, and there were votes at the GMC on two occasions as to what I should do. I was very candid in presenting to them the fact that I was in a minority in the Cabinet and was likely to remain in a minority and asked them what I should do. In both cases they voted by a majority that I should stay in and argue. But if I had left the Cabinet, on the grounds that I disagreed with them — on the EEC, the IMF cuts, the Lib-Lab arrangement, or other matters — you are then faced with this problem. Imagine a Commons vote of confidence after you have left the Cabinet because you disagree with them, do you support that government in a vote of confidence? If you don't and there is a general election because the government is then defeated, do you stand again as a Labour candidate and try to get that government re-elected with the same leadership and the same policy in the election that you have precipitated? That is not a problem to be dismissed. It is a dilemma for many Labour people at many levels.

What was beginning to happen during the period of the last Labour government was that the left was increasingly seeing the importance of developing socialism within the Labour Party as a party, in parallel with support for the Labour government as a government. I can cite as evidence, confirming the wisdom of that strategy, that the National Executive, which had been widely ignored for years as a rather powerless fan club of the parliamentary leadership, came to be seen by the Tory press and by the establishment, from 1975 onwards, as a serious centre of socialist thought and criticism loyal to the government but critical of some of its policies. By contrast if you look back at the minutes of the Labour Cabinet for 1931, you'll find that when Ramsay MacDonald consulted the National Executive about the crisis the NEC said it had little advice to offer, and would be content to leave everything to the Cabinet to decide. Whereas at that time the TUC General Council was bitterly critical of what MacDonald was proposing.

Now if you compare that NEC response with the years of 1975-79 it is quite clear that the NEC and the Party was a real centre of alternative policy that was loyal to the government but was critical, was creative, and was more forward looking and socialist. The more I look back on that recent period the more I think that the role of the socialist critic of the Labour government when it is in power must be to work within the Party, within the constituencies, within the trade unions, at Conference and in the National Executive and its study groups. That is the way to develop countervailing power to the power

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of a Labour government which will inevitably be under establishment pressure and will go wrong and will do the wrong thing from time to time. That is where the power of the left should be exercised, within the Labour Party rather than in futile gestures of pretending you are going to bring the government down, when, of course, everybody knows you are not. For the left to bring a Labour government down would be the one crime that no one would — quite properly — ever forgive. It seems to me that is the answer to those who ask where the left should work, has worked, is working and where it is likely to be successful. It is in the Party.

EH I think you have made the answer to this question a little too easy, partly because it seems to me that your own left, or the sort of left that you represent is, if I may say so, a better Labour left than there has been for a very long time. And partly because it isn't really a question of the personal behaviour of individual ministers. What I was trying to get at is your reaction to the proposition that the Labour left in the 60s, and quite a long time before, really had no alternative policy?

TB That is a different argument. I am not sure that what you say is entirely true. In terms of nuclear weapons policy, public ownership and so on the old left, if you like, of the 1960s was still existing and

working during the 70s. But the answer to your question about alternative policies arises from my earlier answer. It is because the left worked within the Party that it was able to develop the alternative policy. And the alternative strategy, which was accepted overwhelmingly at the recent Labour Party Conference at Wembley, was the one that came out of the Labour Party, and to which the parliamentary leadership contributed very little, and which it didn't really much believe in anyway. Moreover there is no doubt that in March 1974 a majority of the then Cabinet didn't really accept the manifesto on which they were elected. They had to accept that it was the manifesto because it had been developed within the Party and agreed with it but I don't know that they really accepted it. But the pressure to implement it was kept up by the Party. And it was a pressure for a consistent, logical, effective and relevant alternative policy. That was more useful than having a little parliamentary group always threatening to vote against a three-line whip but not able to reflect accurately the views of the Party in the country. So the left MPs did have a real alternative to advocate.

EH Of course one would accept that it's the right thing for the Labour left to operate within the Labour Party and, indeed, it's through the Labour Party and primarily through Labour governments that any social change that is likely to happen in this country is in the first instance going to be achieved. But that isn't quite the same thing as saying that the left within the Labour Party has an alternative policy and alternative solution. I think recently it has come closer to having such a policy for a Labour government than it has previously. Now if I might make this a little bit more concrete. Where do you situate yourself and the sort of people who think like you, compared to the older Labour left traditions, for example, the Bevan type of Labour left, the Keep Left Labour left, the Michael Foot type of Labour left? How do you see yourself as differing from them, or not differing from them?

TB Well, I think one difference between the two is that they were in a minority and we are in a majority. I don't believe that the arguments that we are putting forward represent a minority position. We are in a majority. There is overwhelming support, the questions of policy having been argued out in great detail since the 1972 Conference. I don't say that Conference policy is perfect because it clearly isn't — but it offers a reasonably consistent and different view about how the country's industry and economy should be run, how its social services should be developed, about the Party's internal democracy and about the role of Parliament. That view now has a majority position. So I suppose the biggest difference between the position which I find myself to be in now, as compared to 1951 when Aneurin resigned, was that he was then in a minority and minorities — especially left minorities — can face great difficulty with the Party. At that time there was a clear majority in the TUC for traditional policies, in the National Executive for right wing or revisionist policies, and the Bevanite left never succeeded in getting a majority.

Now, of course, partly because the left couldn't get a majority, a lot of people who should now be in the Labour Party disappeared into community groups, into ultra left movements and so on. Now that the Labour Party has got a majority around alternative — and socialist — policies you are going to find that many of those people who left us in the 60s will be rejoining us. And that is going to consolidate the majority. So that that's the main difference. What the left were arguing at that time, looking back on it, seems to me to be very sensible.

EH I want to get back to this question of how to turn Labour back into a mass movement and a mass party in a minute. In the meantime, I would like to look at the question of this policy of yours. You say in *Arguments for Socialism*[2] and elsewhere that there are three or possibly four alternatives which are being put forward at the moment. There is monetarism, the Thatcher policy, there is something which you call corporatism, there is democratic socialism, and there is what you regard as a non-starter, namely social democracy. Now while I think it is easy enough to see what monetarism means, because we hear it being expounded very clearly, I am not quite so certain what you understand by corporatism, and I'm not very certain either that I understand what you mean by democratic socialism. The two things don't seem to me to be, as it were, of the same kind, fractions with the same denominator.

TB When I wrote that social democracy was a non-starter, what I meant was that the revisionism that was preached by Gaitskell and Crosland was killed, not by the left, but by the International Monetary Fund which simply said to the 1976 Labour Cabinet 'we are not allowing you to do that any more. Whatever you choose to do, we are not having this high level of public expenditure because we regard it as undesirable.' Tony Crosland died six months after his social democratic option had been killed for him by the IMF, and the IMF polished off revisionism fairly effectively. In 1976 I had hoped, when the IMF forced the choice between a socialist solution and a social democratic defeat, that a Cabinet majority might be created for the more radical response. But that was not what happened. Monetarism, as you quite rightly say, is now being tried.

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What I mean by corporatism is this: the centralisation around the consensus politics that came out of Harold Macmillan, Winston Churchill and Clement Attlee, who, during the wartime coalition, used William Beveridge, the Liberal economist, to set down the framework for post-war policy in employment and national insurance. That policy did succeed in its time, in part because of the destruction of our wartime enemies, because of a lot of conditions that won't recur, thus making full employment and the welfare state available. Even the nationalisation of the basic industries was tolerated by the Right in part because those industries had all failed, and they weren't profitable any more, and so if the state did reconstruct such basic industries, this would constitute a subsidy for private industry. So the postwar consensus had a certain solidity about it. But more recently we have seen the slump and the collapse of that consensus as an option. This collapse made those who believed in consensus huddle together more closely and become much more authoritarian. For example both the George Brown pay policy and the Ted Heath pay policy did begin to develop some extremely authoritarian characteristics. So what I call the corporatist tendency, or however you want to describe it, is what happens when the consensus loses its grass roots support and the people at the top have to huddle together to force their policies on to society in a more authoritarian way. In short the top establishment has been driven to use incorporation as a method of governing the country. It occurs when the men at the top decide what has to be done and the trade union function is to deliver its membership in pursuit of any agreement reached by its leadership. That was what Heath tried to get the trade unions to do in 1973 and failed.

The particular characteristic of the British corporate state is that in this country our mediaeval feudalism has lasted so long that it has fused with our modern corporatism and created a most astonishing centralised bloc of political, financial and industrial power which has now virtually succeeded in defeating Parliament as an effective countervailing force, defeating Labour's rank and file, and commanding the general support of the civil service and the mass media. That is an authoritarian system. Mrs Thatcher very skilfully saw that she could do a re-run of the earlier attack on the feudal structure in the guise of recreating freedom for the entrepreneur. And she did it. She put on the laissez-faire armour of the early Adam Smith and Edmund Burke and cut through and won support. Corporatism now has no constituency except in the Golden Triangle of the City of London, Fleet Street and Whitehall. That's what I mean by corporatism.

Now you ask what democratic socialism is. It is an attempt first to find answers to the current problems of crisis by defending working people against the policies of the Government. Through struggle, it tries to generate a grass roots leadership and a perception capable of carrying forward a policy that will reconstruct, and in parallel transform, the power relationships in industry and in society, not just as between capital and labour but as between government and governed. It is both a democratic and a socialist campaign that we are engaged in launching. And in the process it offers the prospects of recreating that winning coalition in 1945 that we spoke about. The Labour Party must align itself with the women's movement, the black movement, the environmental movement, the peace movement, the rural radical movement, the religious movements that object to monetarism and militarism, and bring back into the mainstream of the Labour Party those socialists who have got isolated in sectarian loneliness. That is the way I would present it.

If you say what are the specific policies, well that's something we can argue about. But that is the broad conception of it. Capitalism is now log-jammed by an unresolved constitutional crisis between capital, government and labour. It is not open to us to make government run everything, because that would be authoritarian. Nor can we allow capital to ride rough-shod over us through using monetarist policies. Labour now has to bring about the expansion of the public services and of our industry, by a socialist initiative that is only possible if there is a fully democratic Labour Party that will reflect Labour policies in the House of Commons. We need the recreation of the Labour Representation Committee, with a socialist dimension, at this period in our history. I think that's the way I would describe it.

EH I don't quite follow that, you see. I mean you are comparing different forms of breaking the log-jam, that is getting the British economy, and if you like, British society, moving again. Monetarism does so in Adam Smith's way or pretends to do so, by saying let's go back to the market. Corporatism does so by control from above, bureaucratic control, I add, plus presumably some kind of economic policy which in the past has been a kind of Keynesianism.

TB Plus wage control, that is a part of the corporatist strategy.

EH Plus wage control, if you like. But how does democratic socialism come in? What is that self discipline for democratic control of which you talk from time to time? I mean concretely. It's not that

one isn't in favour of these things, but I would like to see exactly how it solves these specific problems which monetarism and corporatism purport to solve?

TB Well, every society requires discipline in order to operate. The discipline of the market is very clear: if it isn't profitable, it stops. The discipline of the corporate state is by legislation to determine what people are allowed and not allowed to do, including what wage claims they can put in and secure. The concept of democratic socialism is that by diffusion of power there will be a change in the relationships between capital and labour under the self discipline of democratic control. Now that must involve, inevitably, a bigger role for the state, but not only by the state, nor by the state operating solely or principally at the national level.

For example, take the 1974 manifesto concept of the planning agreement that was seriously weakened in cabinet between the February election and the publication of the white paper. Planning agreements were to make the power of the major corporations subject to the assent of the people who worked within them, without putting workers on the board. The concept of the tripartite planning agreement was that major companies would have to clear their corporate strategies with those they employed and they would not get a release of public money by investment grants or regional employment premium or anything else, unless their plans had been agreed at the working level. That was a diffusion of power not a centralisation of power.

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EH Why especially the people within them?

TB Because in the first instance the power of capital has to be made accountable to the people they employ. That is not the only discipline there will be by any means because the government will also be seeking to integrate — and this is a very early stage of a socialist transformation — the strategy of the major companies with the industrial policy of the government in the national interest. Take another example, which may offer a better answer to your question. The participation agreements that I compelled the oil companies to sign, were agreements under which the oil companies could only get their oil back from the government if they agreed to get their company strategy approved by the government. Now that was an accountability to the centre. But it was also my intention, and I began the process, to make those oil companies also accountable to the people they employed. That is a decentralisation of power. If you ask for concrete examples of what we shall do when we come to power, depending when it is, remember we shall have inherited such a broken economy that what will then need to be done will be to take direct measures to recover and recoup the cuts in the public services; to invest directly in industry; to control imports into this country via a planned trade mechanism; and to restore the power to determine our own industrial and economic policy from Brussels back to this country; we shall also have to restore the power of Parliament, especially by passing a Freedom of Information Act so that MPs and the public will be able to know what is happening.

I don't think it's difficult to think of concrete answers to concrete questions. What is difficult is to invest that policy with something that looks philosophically credible in answering an academic's question. I think I know what we would have to do. But what it would look like and how it would actually develop or what label you would feel, as an historian, you should attach to it, I'm not sure. But it would be democratic and not be corporatist. And it would not be monetarist. It would involve public initiatives, and it would involve a transfer of power from capital to labour and from government to Parliament and also to the localities and the regions. Now that you would have to define it when you saw it. What I have described is I believe a democratic socialist programme.

EH But that is exactly what my question is about, namely, what is concretely behind these phrases. These are not my labels, they are yours. What I want to know is in fact what concretely is the meaning of them in terms of what you think ought to be done if Labour gets back. You know, I think it's marvellous, democracy, the more democracy the better — particularly, as you quite rightly said earlier on, we have now got growing centralisation, growing bureaucracy — and a defence of this, including of all the British people, is necessary. Moreover I think this will be a very important way of regaining the political initiative and mass support. But at the same time, you see, democratic socialism as you put it is neither a policy nor a structure; it's a political style, democracy combined with an aspiration, socialism and social change. But what's in between?

TB I do not believe that democracy is just a matter of style. The most bitter battles that have occurred in history have been about who should exercise power. And therefore I do not regard democracy as a stylistic question at all but a basic question. I am interested, for example, that the parliamentary leadership, or the right wing of the Labour Party, have never been much bothered if policy resolutions they dislike have been passed at Conference. They knew they could be neglected. But now that we are debating the structure of power in the Labour Party they recognise the importance of what is happening. Real political battles are all about democracy because democracy, plus an analysis and a proper sense of morality, are the main ingredients of socialism. Unless you believe that history offers you no democratic option as occurred in countries where there was no possibility of peaceful change, and there had to be a coup d'etat in the name of socialism, the battles must be for democracy. After a revolution what emerges is not what I would call socialism in this context. It would be a form of socialist corporatism, and socialist corporatism based on a 100% public ownership is no more acceptable to me in a post-revolutionary situation than is the very mild sanitised Stalinism, in defence of the mixed economy, of the kind that we have had in British corporatism.

So I don't accept that democracy is just a matter of style, it's a matter of who is accountable to who. And I think if you present it that way, people understand precisely what you mean. They do not want just to be a platform for launching somebody else operating in their name into a position of power. They want to be sure when he or she is there that they are accountable for what they do. And this is a very important dimension of what we are saying.

EH You are totally right. Nevertheless, the question of power has very often, in the history of socialism, been made the excuse for saying we don't actually have to bother about what we are really going to do. Everybody said, from Marx on, the really important thing is how we

are going to get there: what we are going to do after that is a hypothetical question which no doubt will be dealt with in concrete terms. The result is that when people got power, in one way or another, and I perfectly agree with you that in Britain it would have to be democratic, the question of what to do had to be started more or less from scratch. This is why I'm pushing you. It's clear, it seems to me, that what you are aiming at is, initially at any rate, a kind of mixed economy. You talk about renegotiation of terms between government and capital and labour. So in a sense it will go on initially being a mixed economy. How exactly is this going to be organised in such a way as to make a subsequent social transformation easier or more likely? What is the strategy of a social transformation — I don't say a transformation which would lead us to some hypothetical replay of the October Revolution because we would probably both agree that this is not really on. I'm not just trying to logic-chop.

TB I know you are not — and I am finding your questions very difficult. I would say this. Democracy is more than just a question of putting somebody there. If democracy was only how you got a government into power then I would agree with you, it would lose its significance.

EH And its accountability.

TB Yes — for remember the corruption of power is a very real thing, in all structures. And democracy must be about what happens

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after you have won a majority and not just an agency for getting a majority. There is one other point to make about democratic socialist transformation. And this is the really difficult thing about being a Labour minister where you are really a sort of worker on the board. Socialist ministers have got to strike the right balance between running society and changing society. If when you get there, you simply run the system as it is then you might just as well leave it to someone else who believes in the status quo to run it. If, on the other hand, you are always only talking about changing society, you may not meet the problems of workers as they face them and you lose your popular support. If people come to me with some urgent problem at a time when their employers are trying to close their works, if all I do is to read them a lecture on the need for socialist transformation they would say 'this minister is no use to us, he's trying to use our crisis to advance his philosophy'. So you have got to run it *and* change it. And that is what the labour movement has got to make Labour ministers accountable for doing.

Now, yes a mixed economy? But a different sort of mix. Big companies — that means that 2% by number, but about 75% by output — must be either publicly controlled or publicly owned. When Aneurin Bevan redefined Clause 4 in terms of 'the commanding heights of the economy', he was redefining the mixed economy in terms of size. I think that's very important. Every little newsagent seems to have been persuaded that a left Labour government is going to nationalise them. We are not. The press have, for example, succeeded in deceiving the small shopkeeper into believing that he is under threat from a Labour government, and for the same reason as the big monopolies. The press have also persuaded every little family struggling to pay their mortgage that they and the big landowners are much of a muchness, both are property owners in a society challenged by rabid revolutionaries.

It is very important to define the mixed economy. The Labour Party believes that the hundred major companies have got to have statutory planning agreements in the first instance to release the power of labour within those companies, to make their management accountable, and to secure accountability to the national economic strategy. Public ownership has also got to be extended, not just to pick up the collapses of capitalism, long accepted as an ambulance function, but also as a way of getting public money into key areas of economic growth and development. Now I don't say that that is a comprehensive transformation strategy, but at least it's got the twin goals of running it and changing it. The two roles have got to be kept in balance. Otherwise you are going to find you become either mere administrators of a declining capitalism, or just dreamers who are brushed aside because what you say is irrelevant to the daily needs of the man who is about to lose his job or the woman who is no longer able to get her child educated or can't get the facilities required for her family.

EH I think that you are quite right in stressing the importance of maintaining the support and gaining the support, rather than simply announcing what you or I and a number of other people in this room may regard as desirable, and this brings me to the last question. It's exactly this mass support and this mass dynamism which is at the moment lacking in the Labour Party. How can we all get it back again?

TB Well I mentioned one of the ways. We must be very clear that we are not interested in a narrow, sectarian, purist Party all taking one view. You may have noticed that now the left is beginning to get a majority on the National Executive, we are deliberately limiting the grounds for expulsion. I think that what the left is now saying is that we want a very broad church. The condition for the broad church,

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however, is groups within the Party don't put up candidates against Labour candidates.

EH When you say broad church, do you mean a broad church of different tendencies within the Labour Party?

TB Yes. I think we must be a broad church. We have got a lot of different groups in the Labour Party. For example, on the right we have got the 'exitists' who have gone, we've got the 'departurists' who are packing to go, we've got the 'ultimatumists' who will go if certain things happen, we have got the 'confrontationists' who have stayed to fight it out. But all these are in a minority. The solid core of the Party is socialist. I think it's important to remain broad because all the groups have got something to contribute to our work. But more than that, I want to broaden the Party out much further. I want to extend affiliations. Why if we are trying to get the NUT to affiliate, shouldn't you try to get the Indian Workers' Association to affiliate? Why if you are trying to get NALGO to affiliate, shouldn't you seek to persuade the women's movement to affiliate? I would like to see affiliations now open on a very broad basis, including the peace movement, the ecological movement and so on. In that way we will broaden the Party.

We must however be careful to see that the Labour Party, at this stage in development, doesn't so excite middle class radicals that they come in and swamp our basic working class support. That is why it is so important to build up factory branches, to expand basic political education. The Labour Party Commission of Enquiry has done a very good job on organisation, finance and political education. We must also win the battle of Party democracy. If the trade union movement is to be induced to take a new and deeper interest in socialism, which is a precondition for mass support and social change, trade union members must be able to be sure that the policies that go through Party Conference will actually be in the manifesto and will be implemented by accountable parliamentary leaders.

If we get all those elements right: a broad Party; an effective organisation to allow the trade unions to play a more active part in the Party; and a capacity to translate policy into action by using a parliamentary leadership that remains accountable, then I think we have a chance of success. I can't put it higher than that. But at least the Party is now beginning to understand where it went wrong and what it must do to put it right. If we succeed we shall be able to answer the credibility question that we get when we go canvassing. You knock at the door and they say, 'well we agree with you about all this, but how do we know that you are going to do it next time?' Until we can answer that question confidently we won't get the third dimension of mass support from people, especially from the working class, who are neither active trade unionists nor active Labour Party people but who really want to know whether it's going to be exactly the same next time as it was last time. We must be able to answer that question credibly to get the electoral majority necessary to breath life into the policies that we have been talking about.

EH But are you not, with all respect and with all my support for what you have said, looking at this in a little too narrow an organisational sense? Isn't the problem also how to get back the 33% or so of the workers who voted for Thatcher? How to get support from those people who are no longer members of the old blue-collar industrial working class on which the Labour Party based itself? How can we all turn the Labour Party into a party which speaks for the nation in the way which once upon a time in, I think, 1940, the Tory people asked Arthur Greenwood to 'Speak for Britain'. Now you see the Labour Party is a class party of the workers. It's a party of the broad alliance of working people. But if the Labour Party is to become the party of the people once again it must once again be able to speak with credibility for the things that worry people, to speak for Britain. Can this be done simply by the democratisation of the internal constitution of the Labour Party, however desirable that is, and by the correct toleration of the variety of things within it?

TB I don't think that democracy or the institutions of democracy, of themselves, *guarantee* a particular outcome. If they did one would be supporting whatever government had been elected. But I do think that one of the characteristics of the British establishment over the last few years has been their total defeatism about the future of Britain. The Vichy spirit has inhabited Whitehall over many many years since Arthur Greenwood was appealed to to speak for Britain. And the sense of total defeatism which characterises the British ruling class has often struck me. I think they have got a slight whiff of self-confidence now from Mrs Thatcher, but they are frightened that she is going to overdo it, and that they will be back in trouble again.

But if you consider the fact that Britain has handed over a great deal of control of its industrial policy to the multinationals, a lot of control of our economic policy to the IMF, the control of many of our laws to the Common Market, and the effective control of our power to make peace and war to the United States, or NATO, you realise what an astonishing collapse of national self-confidence there has been amongst the establishment and what an erosion of democratic control has occurred under a succession of British governments, all of which were elected by the people of the United Kingdom. I don't believe in nationalism or a nationalist policy. Labour is a party with a strong international working class tradition. But democratic self-government and liberation are as legitimate an aspiration for the British people as for the people of Zimbabwe or India or Guyana or anywhere else. Britain is now the last colony left in the British Empire. George Washington got out in 1776, Robert Mugabe got out in February 1980. Britain alone it seems is left with a colonial-type administration led by an establishment which is itself defeatist and is actually frightened of the potentiality and strength of the British labour movement working through parliamentary democracy. They have handed over the keys of power to others outside this country to govern us so that they can be protected from the British working class. An unconscious awareness, a sense that that has happened, is now embedded in the minds of an awful lot of British people.

Unless and until they feel that there is a government going to be returned to power that will put self-government and democracy into its programme and mean it, they may not even think that Labour would speak for Britain. That is a very important consideration. A strong democratic view of the future of Britain and the restoration of the powers of the British people to govern themselves, within an interdependent world society and with international responsibilities, is an integral part of the process of Labour becoming a mass party. We must appeal to those who have voted Liberal or Conservative and to other working people who have deserted the Labour Party in the past because they felt it wasn't doing a proper job of representing them.

EH Well just let me say in conclusion that I think we probably agree on what needs to be done. I think we agree on the urgency of it. I think we agree that it has not yet been done nor have we entirely found the ways of doing it. And I hope, finally, we do agree that everybody on the Left has a share in tackling this task and I hope we agree that all people on the Left, whatever their views, had better concentrate their fire on their adversaries rather than on each other as they are in the habit of doing. □

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[1] The Granada Guildhall Lecture on Trade Unions given by Tony Benn on 15 May 1980. The full text will be published in a book by Granada.

[2] Tony Benn *Arguments for Socialism*, Jonathan Cape 1979. Now available in Penguin paperback.

The transcript was typed by Deanne Burch.

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Tricia Davis
and Catherine Hall

The Forward Face of Feminism

Hilary Wainwright, in her introduction to the new edition of *Beyond the Fragments*, begins by pointing to the Left's failure to extend socialist consciousness and the overlapping nature of inequality and sources of exploitation and oppression. She then continues:

> 'One problem is that of drawing up a common programme of political and social change, meeting the needs of all oppressed groups, and arguing for it among each group. The other problem is that of gathering together all the different sources of strength, uniting the social power of the community with the industrial power of those in production and pitching the popular power against the existing state. This requires a strategy based on the ideas and experience of each movement, and drawing from the lessons of past struggles and international experience. The solution to these problems needs to be more than just *ad hoc* contact between the different movements. Neither is the merging of the movements any solution; there are good reasons for each movement preserving its autonomy, controlling its own organisation. For women, blacks, trade unionists, gays, youth and national minorities have specific interests which may sometimes be antagonistic to each other both now and in a future socialist society.'[1]

This argument for alliances and the recognition of the problems involved in them for all movements, has largely been ignored by critics on the organised Left, who have seen *Beyond the Fragments* as yet another example of the precocious and uppity Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) telling its elders and betters what to do.

> the precocious and uppity Women's Liberation Movement telling its elders and betters what to do.

Yet the question of alliances is actually quite central to the book and, in fact, to socialist feminism. For, contrary to popular mythology which we encounter both on the Left and within the WLM itself, socialist feminists are not socialists who happen to be women, feminists who add 'and class' on to the end of every sentence, nor, by definition at least, women who go to twice as many meetings. Rather socialist feminism is an attempt to define socialism in relation to feminism and vica versa and to hold the two together through a judicious blend of autonomy and alliances. Equally the question of alliances is, or should be, central to current debates about a socialist strategy for the 80s. For as is clear from many of the analyses of Thatcherism in *Marxism Today*, the nature of Thatcherism, its coherence, its power to articulate and generate a new common sense, point to the fact that any effective opposition must be constructed not only around immediate aims — the defence of living standards, existing services, jobs, wage levels and the political rights of different oppressed groups — but also around the more long term aim of building a movement which can effectively challenge this right-wing coherence and produce its own concrete, alternative and total vision of society. We must, in short, examine our potential for developing a unified grouping of diverse social forces and movements, whose homogeneity will rest not on the experience of oppression, whether as workers, women, blacks or gays, but on a common, and painfully achieved, political strategy. We must ask ourselves whether we can help to build feminist, anti-racist and gay movements which are also anti-capitalist, whether we can create a trade union and labour movement which is not only anti-capitalist but also takes on with equal seriousness, feminism, anti-racism and the demands of the gay movement.

CONFRONTING THE DIFFERENCES

Here we want to concentrate on two questions. The first is the need for feminism to make a satisfactory alliance with socialism and the problems of building such an alliance both in general and in the specific situation of the 80s. This involves looking critically at ways in which the challenge of the Women's Liberation Movement is being received on the Left and at some alternative positions within the WLM especially the position described in *Beyond the Fragments*. It also means suggesting some starting points of our own. The second, equally serious and not unconnected question is how the WLM can develop in the 80s.

> Quite basically, socialism and feminism do not have the same objectives.

Differences of objectives

Even within these limited terms of reference the problems of building such an alliance are vast. Quite basically, socialism and feminism do not have the same objectives. Of course, socialist feminists do believe that the overthrow of capitalism has a necessary part to play in the transformation of relationships between women and men. At the same time some socialists believe that the ending of gender and other hierarchies must play a part in the making of socialism. These connections, though, must be negotiated and renegotiated.

This, of course, has always been true. Sheila Rowbotham has used the history of utopian socialism to show the possibility of a fit between socialism and feminism. There is, too, a long history of female participation in working class and radical movements which has been uncovered by feminist and labour movement historians, particularly in the last twelve years. We know, now, that women were active not only in the Owenite socialist movement but also in the reform movements of the early 19th century in some early trade unions, in the movement against the New Poor Law in the 1830s, in Chartism and later in the New Unionism, in the Independent Labour Party and in many movements in more recent history, particularly the peace movement. In some of these women made specific demands as women, and sometimes even organised independently within the wider movement.

However, what many of these histories also reveal is not a fit between socialism and the demands of women at all but a recurring struggle over the relative importance of women's demands and activities. Women were active, for example, in the early period of the Chartist movement. Later, though, when Chartism took a more organised form, following the founding of the National Charter Association in 1840, there were at least occasional complaints about women's interests not being represented and about the exclusion of women from activity. 'Did our brothers but admit our rights to the

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enjoyment of those political privileges they are striving for,' wrote the Sheffield Women's Rights Association at this time, 'they would find an accession of advocates in the female sex . . .'

By the early 20th century, as the suffrage struggle gained momentum, many socialist women, both from the middle class and from the working class, came to the conclusion that an autonomous women's organisation was vital. *The Hard Way Up*, an autobiography by Hannah Mitchell, for example, offers a wonderfully graphic account of how one working class woman came to the realisation that socialism did not necessarily contain feminism, that the connections had to be made through active struggle. Whilst she never disassociated herself from her male comrades and admitted that the feminists of the Women's Social and Political Union often relied on socialist men to protect them at meetings, she '. . . still felt that women must work out their own salvation. "God helps those who help themselves", I thought and stuck to my feminist guns.'[2] But for Hannah Mitchell, and probably for many other women, too, the connection between socialism and feminism was made at great personal cost. Nor was it politically self-evident, as the adherence of many socialist women to the cause of adult suffrage and the rejection of socialism by many committed suffragettes shows.

Socialism and feminism in the 80s

There are no easy answers now as to how alliances might be built. We wish there were, for the indications are that Thatcherism isn't simply an attack on the rights of women but a much bigger attempt to rework old ideologies into a new consensus about the role of women and the nature of femininity as one of the ideological lynchpins for the restructuring of society. In September 1979, for example, Patrick Jenkin, Tory Social Services Minister, connected crime and industrial unrest — the two, he thinks, are rather similar — with the decline of the family. Two months later, in the *Man Alive* programme, he spelt out even more clearly the Tory definition of what a woman's primary role should be when he announced 'Quite frankly I don't think mothers have the same right to work as fathers. If the good lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn't have created man and woman. These are biological facts . . .'

This larger offensive on the part of the Tories requires not only that trade union, community and feminist activists come together to launch a counter-attack, it also requires a feminist answer, one which offers a new and positive account of women's role. For, over the last 10 years feminists haven't simply been underwriting traditional labour movement demands — for the right of women to work and for welfare services which enable women to enter paid employment — we have also been looking at the quality of welfare services on offer, the relationship they have to womens' lives in general and not just to the lives of women as workers, and at the specific relationship of women to paid work.[3]

Yet as the crisis develops and we begin to see something of the extent of the Tories' reactionary programme, it is tempting for the Left to abandon the lessons of 68, that socialism needs to be for something as well as against something, that it must involve people in its making rather than acting on their behalf, and to see feminism as a luxury, which in a period of retrenchment and recession we cannot afford.

The Left: a return to equal rights?

On the Left, for example, the last 18 months has seen the resurgence of an equal rights feminism which may or may not pay lip service to the WLM but certainly goes no further than this. The Labour Party initiated Fightback Campaign for Women's Equal Rights is, for instance, a very mixed blessing. On the one hand it is a welcome sign that the labour movement is taking seriously the threat to women's rights presented by the Tories. It is also another indication of the effect of the WLM in drawing attention to the specific demands of women, for another lesson of history is that the labour movement's record in this area is by no means consistent, and its support for women's demands, even on the minimal level of equal rights, is by no means inevitable.

Yet it seems at the moment at least that the absolutely predominant focus of the Fightback Campaign is centred around an unproblematic notion of a woman's right to work, its chief conscious appeal is to trade union activists, and its underpinning ideology is purely defensive. There is no questioning in its public statements at least of what it is that women have a right to work at, of our segregation into low paid and low status jobs, or of the not unconnected question of the sexual division of labour in the home. Least of all is there any appeal made, or indeed any recognition that an appeal needs to be urgently made, to the countless women, in paid work and in the home, who are simply not galvanised into action by the usual left rhetoric, and who will not necessarily become so as their objective exploitation and oppression increases.

Feminism — fragmented?

It is equally tempting as the optimism of the 70s wanes, for feminists to retreat into the different tendencies which have developed in the WLM. On the one hand, the last three years has seen the emergence of an articulate revolutionary feminist position which sees women as a class, poses male control over women's fertility as our major political focus, and denies the relevance of socialist organisations, although many revolutionary feminists would claim that socialism will follow from a revolutionary feminist politics. In its most extreme form it assumes an inevitable progression from the experience of womanhood to feminist consciousness in much the same way that some sections of the Left have identified the objective experience of being working class with class consciousness as a political force. On the other hand new socialist feminist identities have also developed since the breakdown of the Women and Socialism conference at Mile End in 1975 and the decline of interest in the WLM of left groups like IMG and SWP not fully committed to an autonomous movement.

One of these socialist feminist identities finds expression in the periodic discussions around the possibility of a more coordinated socialist feminist organisation. The most extreme and articulated expression, though, is Shelia Rowbotham's contribution to *Beyond the Fragments* where, by emphasising the importance of the organisational principles of feminism at the expense of a fuller account of the specificity of our anti-patriarchal politics,[4] she does make a fit between feminism and some kinds of socialism. More recently, in her

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article in the *New Statesman*, 'The Trouble with Patriarchy,' [5] she has carried this emphasis to its logical, but, in our view, incorrect conclusion and argued that patriarchy is not a useful concept.

> 'Patriarchy implies a structure which is fixed, rather than a kaleidescope of forms within which women and men have encountered one another. It does not carry any notion of how women might act to transform their situation as a sex. Nor does it convey a sense of how women have resolutely manoeuvred for a better position within the general context of subordination — by shifting for themselves, turning the tables, ruling the roost, wearing the trousers, hen-pecking, gossiping, or, (in the words of a woman I once overheard) just "going drip, drip at him". Patriarchy suggests a fatalistic submission which allows no space for the complexities of women's defiance.'

Again, the appeal, as in some accounts of revolutionary feminism, is to a common sense belief that feminism is somehow unproblematically embedded in women's experience if only we could make the connections. The difference being, of course, that revolutionary feminism points to our bad experiences of men whilst Sheila points to the good ones and our ability to survive the bad ones. 'Relationships between men and women are also characterised by a certain reciprocity so that we cannot assume that antagonism is a constant factor.'

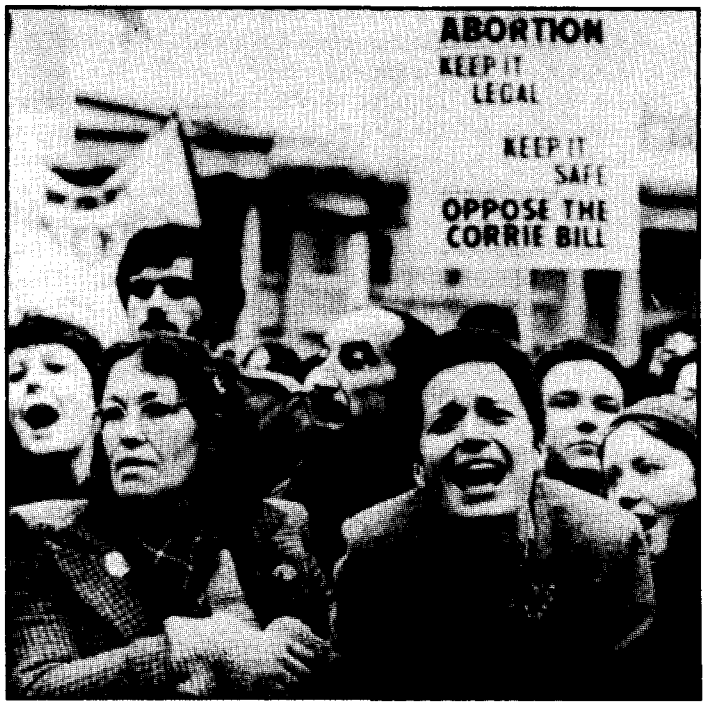
Criticising such a view is not to deny that experience is an important political category. Consciousness raising, which is still a component of feminist politics even if it is no longer at centre stage, is built upon it. Consciousness raising, though, is also built on a belief that experience needs to be understood and theorised in order that it might be used as a basis for wider political change. In particular, we need a theory of patriarchy not so that we can discount the good and loving relationships that exist between women and men, nor so that we can point to the irredeemable hopelessness of the male species. We need it so that we can understand how it is and do something to change the fact that, as Barbara Taylor and Sally Alexander have put it, 'In learning to love men we also learn to subordinate ourselves to them'.[6] Without such a theory there is a real danger that the structures of patriarchy will remain unchanged and that our ability to survive them will continue to depend on our accidental and individual skill as hustlers, henpeckers or gossips. There is a real danger, too, that we will avoid the difficult task of defining socialism in relation to feminism and feminism in relation to socialism by creating a new, basically humanist movement which assumes a fundamental human unity between men and women, and which places the struggle against all social hierarchies, rather than the oppression of women as women, at its centre. This is certainly implicit, and perhaps more than implicit in Sheila's argument.

> 'Just as the abolition of class power would release people outside the working class and thus requires their support and involvement, so the movement against hierarchy which is carried in feminism goes beyond the liberation of a sex. It contains the possibility of equal relations not only between men and women, but also between men and men and women and women and even between adults and children.'

Having raised the problems with some of these groupings and positions, we in no way want to dismiss them. Not only are they among the potential constituents of a left alliance, they also have something quite definite to contribute to the content of such a movement.

SOCIALISM — A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINISM

Within the WLM it had become one of the political orthodoxies of the 70s to stress the radical nature of that political break which occurred in the late 60s. One element of that cataclysmic moment of rupture and renewal was the emergence of a new kind of women's politics and



the identification of this politics with the WLM. Of course the break was important. For the feminism of the WLM is qualitatively different from that which proceeded it. Consequently it posed new questions for socialism which appeared, and indeed were, all the more challenging since one impetus to the emergence of the WLM was a widespread discontent with organised socialism. Where we would disagree with the orthodoxy, though, is the extent to which it sees feminism and feminists being contained within the WLM, or, alternatively, sees feminism outside socialist politics as a purer and better form of feminism than that which exists in relation to socialism. In contrast, we would want to argue two points. The first is that like Shelia Rowbotham we would see socialism and feminism not as pure forms, but as political practices operating within different parameters in different historical periods. Secondly, far from feminism being contained within the WLM, it seems to us that not only have women developed their feminism in significant ways in other organisations, but that also, as a result of this, and this is perhaps where we differ from Sheila's rewriting of the orthodoxy, these organisations have made their own specific contribution to the development of feminism. Socialism was not totally frozen in 1968, any more than the feminism that developed then has remained the same in the intervening twelve years.

By the contribution of socialism to feminism we are thinking in terms not only of ways in which campaigns have been initiated and supported by women on the Left, the most important example perhaps being the struggle around equal pay, where there has been little work done by the WLM as such and a great deal done by trade unionist women. We also have in mind the way in which feminists in socialist organisations have questioned the basis on which women enter and exist within those organisations. This challenge has taken many forms and ranged wide. It includes creches at conferences, sitting in circles not rows, workshops not hierarchies of speakers. More recently there have been the debates at the last two Women's TUC conferences on positive discrimination both within the unions themselves and as a principle for unions to support in relation to women's education, training and work opportunities. Positive discrimination underpins the proposals put forward by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy for representation of women on selection lists. Important too is the principle of autonomy contained in

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the CLPD's proposal that the women's section of the NEC should be responsible to women.

Arguing for an autonomous women's movement — and we still think that is the correct argument, both tactically and strategically — shouldn't and needn't lead either to sectarianism or parochialism. And if, as is clear, feminists in socialist organisations haven't always had unqualified success, then it has to be said both that socialist feminists in the WLM haven't always had an easy ride either, and that the WLM as a whole isn't invincible either. The events at the 1978 WLM National Conference, the clash between revolutionary feminists and socialist feminists, was partly to do with the extreme complexity of the questions being discussed. The confusions which followed from that conference suggests though, as does the absence of conferences since then, that there are some very real problems with participatory democracy.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEMINISM

Equally, the different feminist positions have their contribution to make too. *Beyond the Fragments*, despite the limitations of some of its assumptions and emphases, is an important account and defence of prefigurative politics, by which we mean 'political forms which consciously help people to overcome the continual mining of our capacity to resist which is characteristic of modern capitalism', and which therefore provide, however partially, a concrete experience of a socialist alternative now.

It should not be read as a blueprint for the Left. There are, indeed, many problems with prefigurative politics. Some of these are indigenous, especially the tendency to cult-like separatism, as the history of utopian socialism shows. In addition, some new problems have been raised by Thatcherism. In the 70s, for example, Women's Aid was able to fund refuges for battered women through Urban Aid. Although there are still far fewer refuge places per head of population than recommended in 1976 by the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage there are going to be serious problems in funding refuges in the 80s. Already this year six refuges have been forced to close and many more are threatened by cuts both in the Urban Aid programme and local authority spending.

> recruitment to political activism has never been a central part of our politics

In addition Thatcherism's stress on self-reliance makes it vital that we are clearer about the collective nature of the self-activity we wish to generate through our prefigurative politics and more self-conscious about their function not just as an ambulance service for the casualties of capitalism but also as a political intervention. Linking these two aspects together is difficult but not impossible. Following the dismantling of the Australian NHS, for example, Australian feminists have used their abortion counselling service not only to support women through the traumas of abortion, but also to consciously raise with them political questions about the role and nature of the state and to recruit. Although, of course, many women in this country, including many working class women, have become feminist activists through Women's Aid refuges and other prefigurative forms, recruitment to political activism has never been a central part of our politics, even in very successful campaigns like those against the abortion bills. We think it is now time to ask whether, in our own interests, we shouldn't try to develop that aspect of our work, and whether there aren't also other feminist activities which could develop a more combative role in relation to the state. Women's health groups and childcare projects, for example, have important consciousness raising functions and have contributed a great deal to a feminist critique of the welfare state. Unless they challenge capitalism at the same time as they nurture us now, though, there is a real danger of them becoming elitist alternatives, or cheap social services.

At the same time, *Beyond the Fragments* and the debate going on around it have posed some important questions for the Left and have clearly indicated that the question of organisational forms must be one of the crucial terrains of struggle in the 80s. This is not an inward looking luxury, though we would have thought that the way in which socialists relate to each other in their own organisations is a significant enough question if we are serious about enabling and maintaining self activity and building mass movements rather than small vanguards of totally dedicated people. Our concern about organisational forms, however, is also a measure of how seriously we take questions like democracy, autonomy and pluralism more generally. In other words it relates to how we conceptualise a future socialist society. This is particularly important at the moment as we face a Tory government which not only has individual policies, but has also interwoven these policies into a coherent social vision and successfully discredited the bureaucratic vision of socialism offered by the Labour Party.

> revolutionary feminism is, perhaps, one of the most difficult issues for socialist feminists to cope with.

Learning from revolutionary feminism too

Revolutionary feminism is, perhaps, one of the most difficult issues for socialist feminists to cope with. Certainly many socialist feminists have argued recently, both in private and publicly, that the theoretical gulf between socialist feminism and revolutionary feminism is so wide as to make even the most minimal unity meaningless. On the contrary we would argue that although the division is real — and at times painful — attempts to work together are neither foolhardy nor romantic. Nor are they based on some abstract notion of unity and commitment, though we think it's interesting that since the last election when many trade unionists voted Tory, there has been no call from the Left for socialists to abandon the trade union movement. More seriously, though, radical feminism, and recently revolutionary feminism, have initiated important campaigns and raised important questions which have signficance for us as women, but also as socialists. We are thinking in particular of the issue of rape. Its relevance to us as women is, or ought to be obvious. But nor can its relevance to us as socialists be underestimated for the threat of rape is the most oppressive aspect of our lives and it is one of the crimes, perhaps the most emotive one, which gives the Tories and the right wing press a powerful rationalisation for arguing for and implementing greater police control. This was certainly true in Leeds during the Ripper case. It is also true in Birmingham. Margaret Thatcher, for example, was quoted in the Birmingham *Evening Mail* as calling for a 'barrier of steel' to reinforce law and order in our cities. This was on the day when she was elected to office and followed the rape of a woman in the city centre.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER; THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Building a left alliance, a movement which challenges the coherence of Tory ideology, which includes feminists inside and outside the WLM and which may begin with pragmatic alliances around specific issues but which goes beyond this is, we think, on the agenda. Its potential depends, in part, on the role which political parties, particularly the Communist Party and the Labour Party, both locally and nationally are prepared to play, as well as on the role of smaller or less formal socialist groupings and working class organisations like socialist centres and trades councils. Such an alliance would depend

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crucially on whether political organisations see their function as being simply a supportive one in relation to existing elements, or whether they can devise strategies which are also transformative.

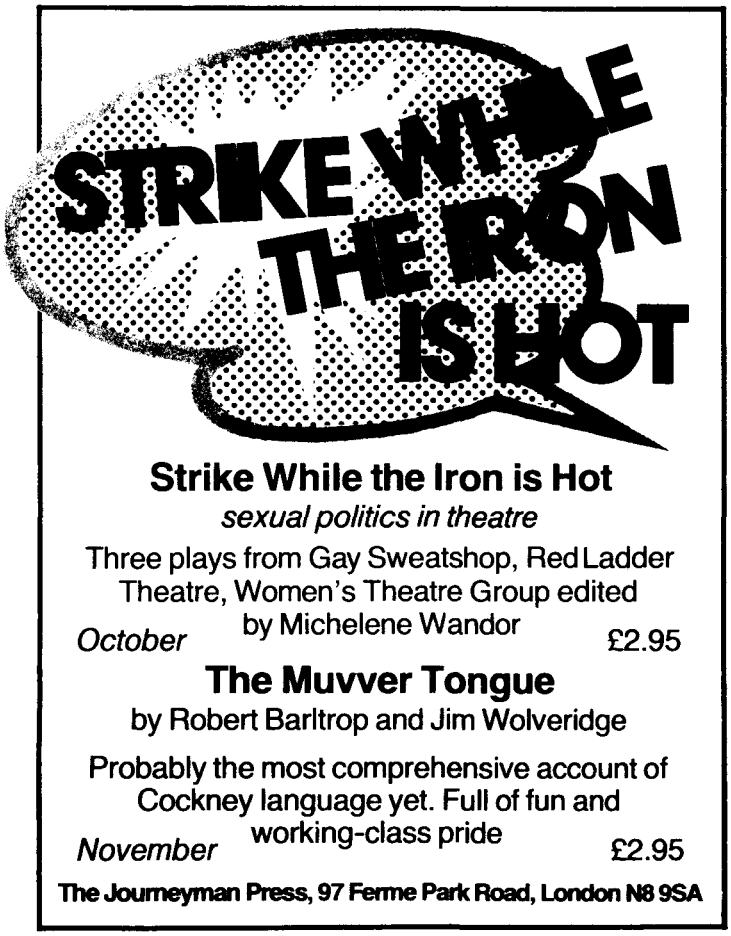
Attempts at cooperation inevitably raise difficult questions of tactics as they did, for example, in Birmingham around the question of pin-ups in the *Yorkshire Miner* and Arthur Scargill's appearance at May Day in 1979. Following the events at May Day the Birmingham Communist Party organised a meeting on sexism and the labour movement and the Trades Council May Day committee invited the WLM to participate in the planning of the 1980 May Day. The meeting sponsored by the Communist Party, as it turned out, was enormous and had some useful spin-offs in terms of trade union support for the Women's Aid squat in Birmingham and the Birmingham *Women's Paper*, although we still need to work on the terms on which these issues are taken up and the labour movement's tendency to focus on the class aspect of feminist campaigns almost to the exclusion of wider feminist concerns. The WLM contribution to May Day, though, and our argument for workshop structures was not so successful and reminded us that feminists have things to learn too. Small is not always beautiful. Nevertheless, these difficulties have to be faced, and, if necessary, faced again, with the recognition that there has to be something more substantial than a client relationship between different groups.

If the problems are not faced, or if they are dealt with unconstructively, our alliances will continually break down with potentially disastrous results as on the TUC abortion demonstration last year. Demoralisation of its membership, alienation of its allies and bad publicity are not something that the Left can willfully afford to encourage. They will only be avoided if active efforts are made to build unity between movements and groups. We cannot assume such unity exists between the interests of men and women, any more than we can assume homogeneity of the working class on other grounds. In fact, the building of an alliance, the development of a *popular* coherent socialist ideology which has concrete expression in our political practice now and the building of class consciousness in the genuinely political sense are crucially interwoven processes, not only if the latter is to be pro-socialist as well as anti-capitalist, but even if it is to maintain a minimal level of trade union militancy.

For the Tories and the Right are both prepared and capable of using women's primary identification of themselves as wives, mothers and consumers in order to play them off against a male-identified trade union movement. We saw this happening in the NUPE strikes during the winter of 1978/79, even when a large proportion of the strikers were women, and more recently in events around British Leyland. It is all very well to say that we know that women are trade unionists and that, in the end, women have more to gain than to lose from trade union action, but we also have to cope politically with the identification of women with these right-wing representations of themselves and their interests. In part this can be done by trade union women demonstrating their solidarity. We have to think, though, whether there aren't also ways of drawing other non-committed women into the struggle, either as wives or as users of services. This in part depends on trade unions developing propaganda techniques. It also depends on them being prepared to add wider demands, for example around the control and quality of services, to sectional ones.

MOVING FORWARD: THE CHANGING FACE OF FEMINISM

Whilst the building of alliances adequate to face and defeat the Tories presents a challenge to the current practices of the Left, it also raises certain questions for the WLM. We have already indicated some of these; the need to reassess and develop our prefigurative politics and



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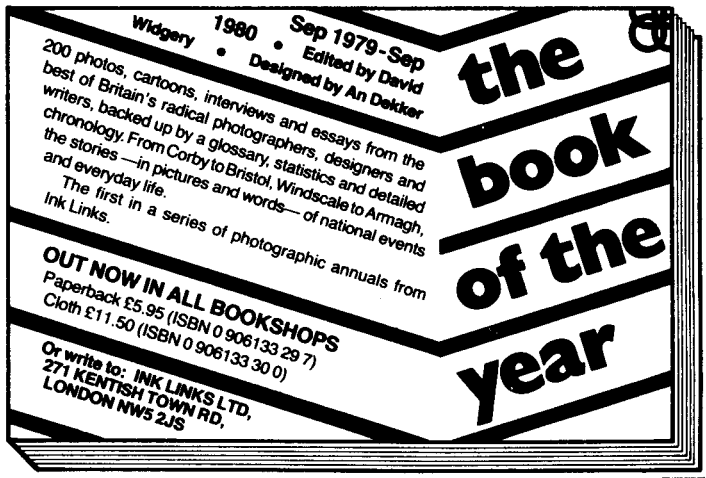
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to be more conscious about using campaigns as a basis for recruitment. Here we want to raise more general questions about organisation and objectives.

A dominant assumption in *Beyond the Fragments* and in the WLM more generally seems to be that feminism must and can be the leading partner in alliances as of right. Extracted from its context and stated baldly such an assumption is, of course, politically naive. In practice socialist feminists have more tactical sense. But the dominance within the WLM of small groups and the emphasis on participatory democracy does lead to difficulties when negotiating with more centralised and systematic organisations of the labour movement. Such organisational differences can certainly contribute to frustration and what should be unnecessary confrontation as they did on the recent TUC abortion demonstration. For, although the TUC cannot be excused for staging what *looked* to many women like an opportunistic take-over bid, there was no way in reality that negotiations as to the organisation of the march could have been more democratic or that the Campaign against Corrie could have negotiated from a stronger base given the loose structure of the WLM.

There is a deep-seated mistrust in the WLM about formal organisation.

There is a deep-seated mistrust in the WLM about formal organisation. This is partly due to a strongly libertarian strand in our tradition. It is also to do with some depressing experiences both within the organised Left and within the WLM itself. The first national conference in Oxford in 1970 set up a Women's National Coordinating Committee, consisting of representatives in different towns and with the basic task of organising national conferences. It was rapidly taken over by a small but vocal and manipulative group of maoists and disbanded the following year at Skegness. At the same time, there is an awareness of 'the tyranny of structurelessness', the fact that despite our commitment to non-hierarchial structures, leaders can emerge and can be all the more difficult to challenge or dislodge because of the personal nature of their power. There is also, since the 1978 conference in Birmingham, a realisation that structurelessness too can also be exploited by noisy cliques. We are a long way from definitive answers to this problem.

Within this context though it would seem to be high time for at least a debate as to whether the WLM in general, or, as seems more likely, socialist feminism in particular, needs a more coordinated organisation. Such a possibility raises questions about the autonomy of local groups and about the nature and diversity of our politics. On these particular points, though, we are inclined to agree with Diana Adlam[7] that although the diversity of feminist politics cannot be totally contained within a structure, nor can it be damaged by a more coordinated politics at least around some issues. More worryingly, perhaps, we have to think about whether greater coordination would cut us off, not only from revolutionary feminism but also from the many women in the WLM who define themselves simply as feminists. We would tentatively suggest that since contact with non-socialist feminists is largely at a local level or around particular issues, socialist feminist organisation would make little difference to that already established unity. Certainly the divisions between socialist feminists and others can't be spirited away by our denying our socialism either individually or collectively, but have to be worked through politically both by our clarifying our positions for ourselves and by discussion within the WLM more generally.

Finally, and briefly, as feminists we have to acknowledge that the wide ranging nature of Thatcherism, its impact on many aspects of our lives, has revealed some alarming gaps in our political competence, and made us feel the need to develop our analysis and demands in ways that are both more specific and more far reaching. There have, of course, always been gaps and confusions, particularly outside the area of the social and domestic. Micro-chip technology affects women's jobs. Nuclear energy affects, amongst many other things, our health. Both raise questions about control and democracy.

just as it is, or should be, the responsibility of men to challenge sexism in masculine culture.

Yet there has been very little discussion of these issues in the WLM. Equally although we have mentioned in passing, as it were, racism and fascism, there has been little discussion as to the role of our predominantly white organisation in combatting racism, and little sustained campaigning. Partly this is to do with a legitimate wish not to trespass on the autonomy of black women. But racism among ourselves and among white women more generally is, after all, our responsibility, not theirs. It is our responsibility to challenge it, therefore, just as it is, or should be, the responsibility of men to challenge sexism in masculine culture. The Labour Party's record with regard to immigration and the harassment of the black community is not good. The Tory government, though, has certainly made it more urgent that we consider these issues, not only as separate from other campaigns, but also as they affect campaigns. The enforced sterilisation of many black women who seek abortions, for example, needs to be recognised in any campaign that really believes in a woman's right to choose.

a new balance between the assertion of ourselves and our sense of responsibility for others

Lastly, the threat of nuclear war which we cannot contemplate without fear for our children, has made us think again about how important motherhood is to our lives and the lives of many women. This is not to say that motherhood is, or should be, the basis of our identities though it is part of them. Nor is it to imply that the WLM should transform itself into a peace movement on 50s lines, focusing all questions on the connection between peace and maternity. But it should remind us that, in rightly resisting being defined as mothers, we have made it very hard for ourselves to find positive things to say as a movement about these roles, even while finding enormous support personally. Perhaps it is time now to find a way of working out a new balance between the assertion of ourselves and our sense of responsibility for others and new ways of expressing that balance politically. □

[1] Shelia Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, 1979, Merlin Press.

[2] Hannah Mitchell *The Hard Way Up*, 1968, Virago.

[3] Beatrix Campbell and Val Charlton 'Work to Rule', *Red Rag*, 1979.

[4] By patriarchy we mean the culturally and historically specific subjection of women to men which cannot be totally accounted for by a Marxist analysis. For a more detailed account of feminist debates around the concept of patriarchy see Veronica Beechey 'On Patriarchy', *Feminist Review*, no 3, pp 66-81 1979.

[5] Sheila Rowbotham (1979) 'The Trouble with Patriarchy', *New Statesman*, 21/28 Dec, pp 970-1.

[6] Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor 'In defence of "patriarchy"', *New Statesman*, 1 Feb 1980, p 161.

[7] Diana Adlam 'Socialist Feminism and Contemporary Politics.' *Politics and Power*, 1980, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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Martin Kettle

The Drift to Law and Order

'People have asked me whether I am going to make the fight against crime an issue at the next election. No, I am not going to make it an issue. It is the people of Britain who are going to make it an issue.'

The words belong to Margaret Thatcher, spoken at the 1977 Conservative Party conference. They echo dozens of similar remarks from senior Conservative politicians and Fleet Street editorials over the past decade. For they all agree that once again in the late 1970s, as a decade earlier, 'law and order' had become a deep popular worry, that this was why it then became a central plank in the radical platform put forward by Margaret Thatcher's wing of the Tory party, and remained a spicy ingredient of the Party's revival at the end of the decade.

Many would argue, quite specifically, that 'law and order' was one of the key election issues in May 1979. The echoes of the Selsdon Toryism of 1970 had never died away, though it was now refocused. The assassination of Airey Neave MP and major street confrontations involving National Front election meetings pitchforked the subject back into centre stage during the campaign itself. The Police Federation, which represents all police officers up to chief inspector rank, stirred the pot with an unprecedented 'law and order' manifesto which appeared as an advert in almost every daily paper. The former Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, hit the front pages with an outspoken attack on the trade unions. And Margaret Thatcher went out of her way to stress her keenness to give parliament a quick opportunity to bring back the death penalty, while making no secret of her personal support for the return of hanging.

An issue of popular concern

There is no doubt that large numbers of people *do* worry deeply about something called 'law and order'. A recent survey of post-war opinion polls on the subject concluded: 'the trend of public concern over law and order is unmistakeable.'[1] The polls show that three-quarters of us want the death penalty back, that 93% of us want heavier sentences imposed for violence and vandalism, and that only 25% of us have ever felt uneasy about anything the police have done. And in a period when corruption in their ranks has rarely been out of the news, the police's reputation for honesty and ethical standards remains five times higher than that of trade union officials.

Perhaps we may suspect the value of such surveys, but no amount of monkeying about with figures can disguise the fact that the overall serious crime rate has quadrupled over the last quarter century and that one's chances of being a victim of violent assault have increased in the same period.

However, 'law and order' isn't that simple. It is a subject which stirs strong feelings and, often, strong prejudices. As a result, most discussions on the subject generate heat rather than light. Think of the public attitude to any mention of Brady and Hindley, the 'moors murderers', for instance. In the rush, vital facts are frequently overlooked.

'Seen objectively against the background and problems of 50 million people, crime is not even among the more serious of our difficulties . . . In 1976, there were only 565 homicides in England and Wales, including deaths from terrorism, and 548 of these led to arrests.'[2] This is the judgment not of some devil-may-care libertarian 'do-gooder' but of Sir Robert Mark, who is certainly no law and order dove.

It is vital to get the crime question into perspective. International comparisons show how lucky this country remains. The murder rate in England and Wales, for example, remains significantly lower than that in the city of Detroit alone. Britain's overall reported crime rate has gone down for two years running. The police remain markedly less powerful, violent and, indeed, less corrupt than in many other advanced capitalist and socialist societies. The courts are under heavy pressure to avoid sending offenders to prison. And, by no means least, the liberal legislation of the 1960s (on abortion, homosexuality, hanging, censorship and so on) has stood very firm against repeated and well-marshalled assaults to which, in what some have called a 'law and order society', it might have been expected to succumb.

What is law and order?

So what is meant by 'law and order'? First, it is a policy area covering crime and justice. Within this, it is also a group of big state-run 'agencies' — like the police, courts and prisons. It is also some specialised agencies, like the immigration control and security services. In England and Wales, at any rate, it is therefore the part of the state which is administered by the Home Office.

But, second, it is a much broader idea or attitude — even a sanction. It is a belief in and practice of *discipline* in attitudes, behaviour and choices in the home, the streets and the workplace. Stuart Hall and others have described the way that the first has broadened into the second as 'legitimating the recourse to law, to constraint and statutory power' under which society is 'toned up and groomed' for the 'routinisation of control.'[3] To support this thesis, they point especially to the use of legal constraints on the labour movement and, in particular, to the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act, 1971.

The problem with this analysis, it seems to me, is that while it rightly defines 'law and order' in terms outside the narrow limits of crime and justice policy, it pays insufficient attention to the concrete changes within that crime and justice field. These changes, which mainly concern the autonomous development of the 'agencies', and their readiness, willingness and ability to dictate what is and isn't 'law

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and order', provide the chief thrust of the growing intervention in political and social events.

This article will therefore try to show how it is inadequate to speak of 'law and order' in purely crime and justice terms (and will analyse the specifics of the Tory and Labour records in government). But it will also show how internally-generated changes within the 'agencies' largely define the scope of the disciplinary sanctions invoked against wider society.

LAW AND ORDER: THE TORY AND LABOUR RECORDS

There were four specific 'law and order' commitments in the 1979 Conservative manifesto. They may have been vote winners, but their real combined effect would always have been limited and has, in any case, been moderated since the election.

(1) The commitment to a free parliamentary vote on hanging at an early point in the new session was always carefully hedged. It was nothing more than a pledge to test the parliamentary temperature. And when the test was taken, on 19 July 1979, there was a majority of 119 against reintroduction (one of the largest majorities in recent times). In spite of Thatcher's personal support for it, 94 Conservatives voted against hanging, led into the lobbies by the new Home Secretary himself, William Whitelaw.

(2) The commitment to a tougher regime in detention centres for young offenders — the headline-grabbing 'short sharp shock' — was a pledge merely to introduce an *experimental* tough regime. It is now being tried out, at two detention centres, and it remains very doubtful whether it will ever be extended wholesale. Apart from anything else, it is an experiment whose success or failure is very difficult to assess either quickly or at all. And, in addition, the scheme has little support within the Home Office or among the people responsible for supervising it.

(3) The commitment to a wider range of sentences for offenders — especially for young offenders — certainly sounded tough. In reality, there is only one specific pledge, to change the Criminal Justice Act, 1961, to allow the courts to send young offenders to prison for less than three years. For the most part, though, the Government's sentencing policies have centred consistently on urging courts to impose non-custodial sentences (ie, not sending people to prison), suspended sentences (ie, not sending them to prison unless they reoffend) or, if prison sentences must be given, to make them shorter. 'Would such a change really create so much difficulty?' Whitelaw asked in July.[4] On reflection, it would have been far more threatening if the manifesto had pledged a *narrower* range of sentencing.

(4) The commitment to tighten the immigration rules probably affected the lives of more people than any of the proposals. Even so, because of the strictness of the controls already in operation, the maximum numbers whose chance of entry into the UK would have been lost under the new proposals would have been 4,000 a year. Even so, significant parts of the package were dropped after the election. The plan for a register of dependants and for annual quotas (measures long advocated by Enoch Powell) were abandoned after civil service pressure. And the controversial 'foreign husbands' rule was slackened — albeit in a more racist way.

It makes good headlines to label the Conservatives as the 'hang 'em and flog 'em' party — and undoubtedly the Party contains more hangers and floggers than other parties. But it is also worth stressing how few of the traditional 'backwoods' demands ever formed or yet form part of the Government's plans. No moves to bring back corporal punishment (abolished in 1948). No moves to bring in tougher censorship laws (how little is heard now from the Festival of Light and its Muggeridge moths, compared with the early 70s). No moves towards the bill of rights so often demanded by the Tory right and by Lord Hailsham (who as Lord Chancellor is certainly in a position to do something about it). No moves to abolish the Commission for Racial Equality or the Equal Opportunities Commission. No moves to introduce repatriation of immigrants.

largely created by ever-rising numbers having to be housed in a finite number of inadequate buildings.

Although it would be foolish not to expect something more dramatic during the lifetime of the administration, its record so far is undeniably modest. Judged by what it has done, and by what it has said it will do, as well as by what it has not done, the Thatcher government has not even attempted a shake-up in the Home Office to match its aggressive attitude in other areas of government.

Tory and Labour — a basic continuity

Indeed, the dominant feature of narrow Conservative 'law and order' policy is its basic continuity with the policies of the last Labour government, even while masquerading as a tough new broom. The first action of the Conservatives after the election provided a classic example. With great theatricality, they awarded a pay increase to the police. It seemed to show the new regime's priorities and Whitelaw naturally made a proud boast of it at last autumn's party conference. It called forth great indignation from the unions and from the Left. And yet, all that the Conservatives had done was to bring forward by a couple of months a pay award which had been already agreed by their Labour predecessors.

The absence of a real break between the two governments also shows in more substantive matters. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act, 1980, which (among many other things) strengthens police powers by legalising the practice of detention for questioning, may seem like a trial run for similar changes in England and Wales and like proof of a 'pro-police' policy. Both are true, but Labour introduced an almost identical bill at the back end of its term of office, which only fell because the general election was called.

Within the next two years, the Government will introduce major

[1] *New Society*, 12 June 1980.
[2] Robert Mark, *In the Office of Constable*, p 255.
[3] Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis*, p 278.
[4] Speech to NACRO conference, 15 July 1980.

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day to day practice of immigration control at ports of entry is jealously screened from independent supervision.

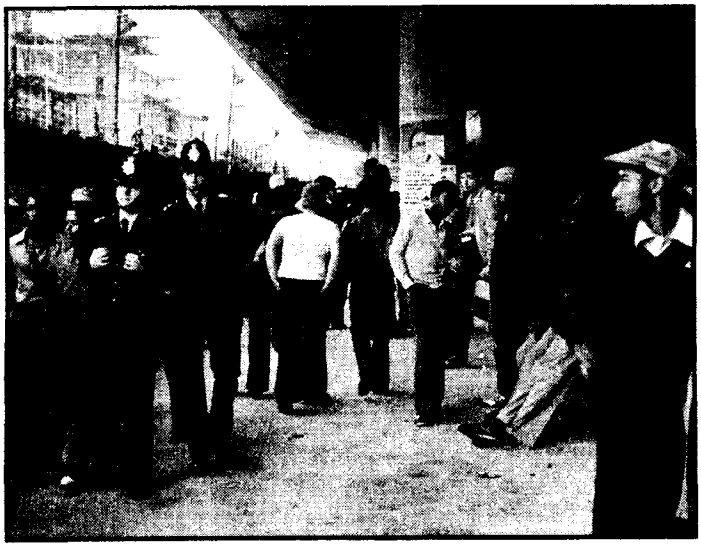
changes in criminal procedure south of the border as well. They will cover the police's powers to search, detain, interrogate and prosecute; it will be the most significant legislation in this field in modern times. Yet it won't be a 'Tory Bill'. The changes will be drawn from the report of a Royal Commision on Criminal Procedure which was set up by James Callaghan and on which Labour too would undoubtedly have legislated. And if the Conservatives finally reject some of the Commission's recommendations (like the radical proposal to reform the prosecution system) it will not be because of a Conservative Party line.

This is because the Home Office (in the person of its civil servants) has *its own line*, quite independent of any party line, even that of the Conservatives. This line is largely dictated by its need and desire to sustain the agencies which it, nominally, controls. But, of course, it is heavily dictated to by the agencies themselves. And if *they* put their foot down, then so will the civil servants and so too (as their records show) will the Home Secretaries who, again nominally, run the department.

In the prisons, recent restructuring of management and administration announced by Whitelaw was wholly based upon the proposals of the May Committee of Inquiry set up in 1978 by Labour's Merlyn Rees. And the Government's 1980 White Paper on the reduction of pressure on the prison system gives just as little ground on internal reform as did the Home Office under Rees when the Select Committee report to which the new White Paper is a response was first published in 1977. In both cases, it is the *Home Office's own view* which has prevailed, not any *party view*.

The reluctance of the Conservatives to respond positively to the Select Committee on Prisons calls to mind its equally grudging recent reaction to an all-party Select Committee proposal to abolish the 'sus' law. In this case too, the official dead bat is characteristic not so much of the Party's policy as of the deep resistance to outside enforced change which dominates the Home Office.

Labour's record, too, is littered with the corpses of forgotten radical reports. It was Labour which capitulated to the furious front-page denunciations of the *Sun* and buried the 1978 report of the Advisory Council on the Penal System (now cut down in the quango cull) which called for wholesale shortening of prison sentences. It was Labour which failed to legislate on the basis of the Devlin committee on identification evidence. It was Labour which came to power in 1974 committed to reform of the Official Secrets Act and then dropped the idea because of Home Office opposition, and Labour which later failed to introduce the safeguards on personal information called for by the Lindop report on data protection.



Labour's lack of a libertarian tradition

In the 1960s, it was perhaps possible to draw real distinctions of substance between Conservative and Labour Home Office policy — distinctions which were personified in the contrast between Henry Brooke's inhumanity and Roy Jenkins's liberalism. By the 1970s, these distinctions had beyond question been reduced to mere matters of degree. Jenkins's second term at the Home Office (1974-6) was far less innovative than his first; its main legacy, ironically, being the 'temporary' Prevention of Terrorism Act, brought in after the Birmingham bomb atrocities of November 1974. His two successors, Merlyn Rees and William Whitelaw, share a personal friendship and a schooling in consensus administration at the Northern Ireland Office. Now they have brought these traditions to the Home Office, too.

One major reason why they were able to achieve this consensus and continuity is the absence of a living alternative libertarian tradition in the modern Labour Party and in the labour movement generally. E P Thompson has suggested that this absence is due in part to a 'profoundly pessimistic determinism' within the Left about law and the state. Crudely put, it is based on the simplistic notion that the *sole* function of the state under capitalism is to defend the capitalist system and that any attempts to reform it are mere glosses. It sanctions the notion, as Thompson puts it, that 'If *all* law and *all* police are utterly abhorrent, then it cannot matter much what *kind* of law or *what* place the police are held within.'[5]

For the most part, the Home Office has also been regarded by the Labour Party at best as a wholly marginal department to the economic and spending departments, at worst as a ministry which seems to be doing a necessary job. The only break in this pattern came in Jenkins's first term (1965-7) and was influenced by a group of articulate professionals (mainly liberal lawyers) outside the mainstream of the movement.

The result has been that the central policy areas in the Home Office — policing, prisons, criminal procedure and (to the Left's shame) immigration — have been allowed to develop autonomously. They are treated as administrative areas, within which substantive political disagreement is not only unlikely but also even undesirable.

In part, this stems from a worthy, and almost Enlightenment notion that the workings of a fair system of legal procedures should be free from executive or 'political' interference. But it also reveals a black hole in the theory of the peaceful transformation of the state. And it has allowed the state agencies which operate these policy areas to develop and expand their own definitions of the proper boundaries of their work and to lay down a deep-rooted autonomy within these boundaries. This process lies at the heart of the 'drift into a law and order society' under which law and order takes on its wider meaning and begins to involve every one of us.[6]

LAW AND ORDER AND THE STATE AGENCIES

The autonomy of agencies is especially marked within the prison system. Here there has been, for several years, a massive crisis of internal conditions — largely created by ever-rising numbers having to be housed in a finite number of inadequate buildings. There is, too, a crisis of regimes, created by the officially acknowledged failure of the 'treatment' model of imprisonment (which claimed that prisons should aim to make prisoners into nice citizens) — now to be superceded by 'positive custody'.[7] Above all, there is a crisis of

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control, as the courts on the one hand, and the prison administrators on the other, manoeuvre against the militant, hard-line prison officers.

Yet these crises have festered behind closed doors, both literally and metaphorically. The Home Office Prison Department and the prison officers are locked in battle but parliament, press and most members of the public have voluntarily excluded themselves from any part in it.

This is partly because the law gives so much administrative licence to the department. The courts are unwilling, and to some extent, unable to intervene. As a result, British prison practice has to be challenged further afield, by using the European Convention on Human Rights. Parliament consistently fails to make good the courts' reluctance. Informal attempts to exercise some control from outside have been tried — by local authorities, by prisoners' relatives and support groups, sometimes even by lay workers in the prisons, like teachers and probation officers. But all are met with deep and, so far, effective antagonism from the two warring factions. Like the police, the prisons are able to rely upon and exploit a tradition of non-interference given sanction by the laissez-faire approach to the doctrine of law and order.

Immigration

The same goes for the immigration process. Here, too, the system is closely controlled by a department within the Home Office. The courts are content to endorse and extend the administrative autonomy of the Secretary of State (and hence of immigration officers). The day to day practice of immigration control at ports of entry is jealously screened from independent supervision.

But with immigration, autonomy is not the only important issue. Sanctioned by the all-party consensus on illegal immigration (a term that has been greatly widened by the courts), and bolstered by periodic bouts of hysteria about 'swamping', the immigration service and the police with whom they work enforce a system of checks which relegates all non-whites to the margins of the law and order society. Immigration practice, and the ideology which underpins it, place all black people at risk by constantly questioning their right to be in this country.

In so doing, immigration control consistently negates and frustrates the aims of race relations legislation. This is not the view of both the major parties, however, who assert that firm control provides the atmosphere of reassurance to the white population that will enable good race relations to prosper. In fact, the reverse is the case. Even the government backed Commission for Racial Equality has tried to mount a major inquiry into the government's own immigration department — an inquiry bitterly opposed by the Home Office.

Thus law and order grinds into everyday life. The immigration system provides a classic example — though by no means the only one — of the process by which these unsupervised agencies have been able to tighten the social disciplinary screw by extending their regulatory powers into speculative surveillance over much larger groups than they were originally set up to control.

The police

Far and away the most powerful engine in this movement is the police force. The police have never been solely concerned with catching criminals. As every speech and publication celebrating last year's 150th anniversary of the police pointed out, they see their major task as *prevention* — creating the conditions in which crime will not take place. But as Robert Peel's original instructions to the Metropolitan Police in 1829 pointed out, their goals are not merely the prevention of crime, but also the prevention of *disorder*.

Thus, from the first, the police have been involved in social conflict as well as crime. The process has ebbed and flowed through the past century and a half but there is no doubt that the past two decades have witnessed a renewed expansion of these terms. In particular, with the growth of the modern state, a range of social problems have been redefined in policing terms. One example would be the Notting Hill Carnival — a community event now redefined as a big policing 'problem'.

Robert Mark is rightly most associated with this process, but he has left a widespread legacy. Sir James Crane, the chief inspector of constabulary for England and Wales, sums up the current official assessment in his latest annual report: '1979 . . .heralded the end of a decade of unprecedented economic and social problems and technological change, with accepted standards and values of behaviour being strongly questioned and severely tested by some sections of society.'[8]

Alderson and Anderton

In terms of 'prevention', these lessons have led the police in different directions. On the one hand, there is the 'proactive' community policing advocated by the eloquent John Alderson, chief constable of Devon and Cornwall. This concentrates on evolving a common strategy among social services, community groups and voluntary organisations — all coordinated by the police — to identify and carry out crime prevention needs at grassroots level. This form of policing 'reaches out to penetrate the community in a multitude of ways. . . . It seeks to reinforce social discipline and mutual trust in communities.'[9]

On the other hand, there is the highly technologised political surveillance side of prevention. This is notably associated with James Anderton, the hard-line chief constable of Greater Manchester, who informed TV viewers last year: 'I think that from the police point of view that my task in future, in the ten to fifteen years from now, the period during which I shall continue to serve, that basic crime as such — theft, burglary, even violent crime — will not be the predominant police feature. What will be the matter of greatest concern to me will be the covert and ultimately overt attempts to overthrow democracy, to subvert the authority of the state and, in fact, to involve themselves in acts of sedition designed to destroy our parliamentary system and the democratic government in this country.'[10]

Even in the traditional areas of policing, criminal catching, the preventive principle is being invoked to justify the extension of boundaries. The proposals made by Sir David McNee, the Metropolitan Commissioner, to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure in 1978 would make it easier for the police to question and search suspects at an earlier stage of their inquiries. They would allow the police to have access to information on more members of the public through banks and fingerprint checks. A more speculative approach to policing would be legitimised, and all in the name of the great god, prevention.

and all in the name of the god prevention.

The contrast between the Alderson and Anderton approaches is frequently made. In fact, the two are different sides of the preventive coin, as Anderton has acknowledged in his most recent annual report when he observed that 'neither is complete, sufficient nor appropirate

[5] E P Thompson 'The Secret State' in *Writing by Candlelight* 1980.

[6] Stuart Hall, *Drifting into the Law and Order Society*.

[7] *Committee of Inquiry into the United Kingdom Prison Services*, Cmnd 7673 October 1979.

[8] *Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary 1979* Cmnd 725 July 1980 p 3.

[9] John Alderson, *Communal Policing* 1978.

[10] BBC-1 'Question Time', 16 Oct 1979.

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in itself and both complement the middle ground'.[11]

It is also recognised by Alderson who, although he has frequently and bravely criticised the seduction of police thinking by the 'quasi-military reactive concept', still presides over a force which contains all the specialist reactive squads — like the Special Patrol Groups and Police Support Units — more associated with the Anderton approach.

'Prevention' — and the spread of policing

The elision between crime and disorder is fundamental to an understanding of the spread of the preventive policing concept and, indeed, to the whole festering power of 'law and order' ideology. It isn't confined to Britain, of course. Spiro Agnew once said 'When I talk about troublemakers, I'm talking about muggers and criminals in the streets, assassins of political leaders, draft evaders and flag burners, campus militants, hecklers and demonstrators against candidates for public office and looters and burners of cities.'[12] The law and order creed embodied in this bracketing of killers and demonstrators is a feature of all western countries.

British politicians and police are just as practised as Agnew. A 1977 police 'field manual' by a senior London officer advises new recruits to watch out for people who 'although not dishonest in the ordinary sense, may, owing to extreme political views, intend to harm the community you have sworn to protect,' and continues: 'While there are subtle differences between these types of extremists and thieves, it is difficult to put one's finger on material distinctions.'[13]

These attitudes are institutionalised by a variety of routine police practices. Almost every aspect of police work is subjected to a routine — an important point to remember when occasional repressive practices come to light. The most important general practice is the centralisation within each police force of local intelligence through the collator system. Collators maintain personal files on people of interest to the police, and are not restricted to those who have been charged or convicted. The computer records of one force — Thames Valley — are computerised in a Home Office experiment which may be extended nationally later this year — though if it is, the decision to do so will be taken without advance parliamentary discussion. The sort of material held in these records is frequently trivial and unsubstantiated, as well as irrelevant to any conceivable crime fighting police — like whether a person lives in a squat, for instance.[14]

> the original aim soon degenerated into wholesale monitoring of the movements

Police records are like a giant sponge, gradually soaking up all sorts of information. But it is information for action. In the case of the Special Branches, it is political information, collected both for the use of the security services (MI5) and for police operational use against demonstrations and strikes. The SB has quadrupled in size in the last decade and is now 1,600 strong, maintaining files on over 1¼ million people. Each of the country's 52 regional police forces has its own SB. One of their acknowledged targets is 'subversion' — and government admissions have now confirmed what most of us assumed anyway, that this label applies to socialist and industrial activists and others who are also engaged in completely legal oppositional activity.

Some police will assert that this whole marginalisation and delegitimation of sections of the community has been forced upon them by the growth of terrorism. There is no denying that there is some truth in the claim. Terrorist actions in Britain *have* compelled a trained police response, some of which, had it not been for terrorism, would not have been developed otherwise. However, there is no real doubt that the response penetrates far beyond the threat, that it was developed well before the threat materialised in the early 1970s and that the marginalisation process has, in any case, many causes, such as immigration control, in addition to terrorism.

Police opposition to demonstrations

Since 1968, the year in which street demonstrations against the Vietnam war reached their peak, the police have engaged in a long-term attempt to destroy the legitimacy of public protest. They have been at the forefront of the attempts to impose legally binding advance notice conditions on marches, and to extend other legal curbs over large crowds. This drive has not been based upon any fear of excessive violence. It rests upon the police's growing opposition to demonstrations as such.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) — the chief constables' 'union' — has said, for example: 'Today the right to demonstrate is widely exploited and marching is the most chosen form of demonstration adopted by protesters. *Irrespective of the peaceful nature of the processions*, the numbers involved bring town centres to a halt, business is severely disrupted and the public bus services thrown out of schedule. In short, a general annoyance is created to *the normal process of daily life*.'[15] (my italics)

The police use any violence which does occur on demonstrations to back their campaign — though, in doing so, they arbitrarily single out this aspect of the danger of the officer's job. They constantly harp on about the alleged financial cost of their public order policing — often with highly dubious figures. And on the streets themselves, tactics such as mass policing, the use of the Police Support Units and SPGs, unnecessary cordoning off of routes, surveillance from rooftops and helicopters all help them to draw more firmly the frontier between 'the normal process of daily life' and political protest.

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Industrial conflict

It is less clear that the police play such a crucial leading role in policy-making for the handling of industrial public order. To some extent, this is due to sleight of hand. In several recent submissions to government they have tried to redefine mass picketing as 'assemblies', in an attempt to differentiate it from the limited peaceful picketing defined in the new Employment Act. There is no doubt that the police seek to delegitimate mass picketing and that this is broadly in line with their campaign against marches.

However, in the industrial field, police leaders seem anxious not to be drawn into the strict regulation of any and every picket line. They have also taken steps recently to adopt a conciliatory line towards trade union leaders; Len Murray, for example, has been invited to address police cadets — a notable break with tradition, especially in a management still edgy over demands for police unionisation and the right to strike.

> and hence not a part of that 'society' from which the police claim their authority

ACPO president, Alan Goodson, has taken a cautious view of the Government's code of conduct on picketing. He has claimed that the police need no new powers. Sir David McNee has made it clear that the police will not get involved in identifying outsider pickets against whom employers may be contemplating civil action under the Employment Act. And the former head of the Police Staff College, Gerald Lamford, has spoken out in favour of James Prior's cautious approach to industrial relations law. 'There is no way in this country in which legislation which does not command general support from the people can be enforced,' he told a meeting of the Industrial Society, earlier this year.[16]

Elsewhere — few scruples

But if the police are wary of confronting the labour movement when it is exercising one of its basic weapons — picketing — there are other areas where fewer scruples exist and where the police knowingly and explicitly function in a non-consensual framework.

The police's involvement in the emergency planning network compels them to act in this way. As a result of changes introduced in the early 1970s, the police themselves have now been given the role of summoning military aid in civil emergencies. In principle, these powers are for use in time of flood, disaster or war. In practice, though, in the last decade, the emergency powers have been invoked in the context of industrial disputes and the police's preventive public order powers. Since 1977, the police themselves have acted in a strike-breaking role during the firemen's strike (1977-8), the ambulance drivers' strike (1979) and the social workers' strike (1979). A detailed study last year concluded that, in constitutional terms, 'there are no limits whatsoever placed on the employment of police officers replacing striking workers.' As a result, the study said, the only problem facing either government or chief constables wishing to extend the role is 'a question of legitimation.'[17] It is hard to believe that in the recession, with over 2 million officially unemployed, that they will fail to find a way of providing that legitimation.

There are several other important examples of this law and order imperialism under which social and political movements are redefined in policing terms. In Europe, nuclear energy has been one such and some illustration of how this may also happen in Britain can be found in the remarkable powers given to the UK Atomic Energy Authority police in 1976, and in the vetting and security measures which now surround the industry.

Cultural events have not been immune from the process ever since the 'moral panics' of the late 1960s. Rock festivals have often been unnecessarily and aggressively over-policed — notably in Windsor Great Park in 1974. Explicitly political musical festivals organised by Rock Against Racism have been regarded by the police with great suspicion. The same is true, above all, of black peoples' cultural events. The most obvious example is, of course, the annual Notting Hill Carnival which, in one annual report of the Metropolitan Police, was even classified as 'a demonstration'.

Nationalist movements

Nationalist movements are given special attention. This has long been true of the Irish, of course; the Special Branch itself was first set up as long ago as 1883 to penetrate Irish nationalist sympathiser groups. But few people realise that the SB and MI5 have long been equally interested in Welsh and Scottish (and for that matter, Cornish, probably) nationalism — as part of their brief to defend the unity of the state — the United Kingdom. The police treatment of Welsh language militants would seem inexplicably and ridiculously fierce

[11] *The Times*, 13 May 1980.
[12] *The Internationalist*, March 1979.
[13] David Powis, *The Signs of Crime*, p12.
[14] See 'Society under surveillance' by Duncan Campbell in *Policing the Police Vol 2* (ed Peter Hain) and David Leigh, *The Frontiers of Secrecy*.
[15] *Home Affairs Committee: Law relating to public order*, HC 384-iii, February 1980.
[16] *Daily Mirror* 28 Feb 1980, *Daily Telegraph* 21 Feb 1980, *The Times* 26 Feb 1980, *The Guardian* 21 July 1980.
[17] *State Research*, Bulletin 14 Oct-Nov 1979.

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were it not for this factor. It helps to explain the harrassment of language activists in the wake of the recent second-homes arson campaign in Wales. As experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Act has shown, the original aim of catching those responsible for specific crimes soon degenerated into wholesale monitoring of the movements and activities of entire communities.

At the same time as the state agencies extend their spheres of influence under the sanction of law and order, they have resisted every single outside attempt to control them. Thus the osmosis of law and order works all the while against democracy, because its inherently authoritarian character is incompatible with debate, discussion, participation or accountability. At local and national level, in the prisons, the immigration service, the courts and the police, the resistance to control has been consistent.

Law and order ideology drives this determination. It encourages the police and their like to condemn every criticism of them as both politically motivated (ie, left-wing) and 'anti-police'. Whoever criticises them is, by definition, anti-law and order and hence not a part of that 'society' from which the police claim their authority. Margaret Thatcher herself gave the clearest possible proof of this process when, in a short, sharp remark following criticisms of police attitudes to the National Front by Lewisham councillors last April, she ordered that what the police need 'is support and not criticism.'[18]

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT RESPONSE

The police are most effective at encouraging the press to take up this attitude. When the criticisms mounted earlier this year over deaths in police custody and the Blair Peach murder, an article immediately appeared in the *Daily Mail* entitled 'This sinister plot to knock our police.'[19] The Labour Party has done little to distance itself from the authoritarian backlash. A hawkish motion on law and order was pushed through the 1978 Party Conference at James Callaghan's instigation, to ensure that Labour couldn't be accused of being soft on law and order in the coming election. And six right-wing Labour MPs' response to the criticisms of the police this year was to put down an early-day motion 'abhoring political propaganda from any source designed to weaken and discredit the police.'

But there are now slight indications that the tide is turning. Groups like the Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice, chaired by former Home Office minister, Alex Lyon, have been formed to counteract the hawkish response on policing, prisons and sentencing which all too often comes from the Party. Several Labour parties have begun to tackle the question of police accountability and in London a 'Campaign for a democratic police force' has been established. The Labour national executive has set up a study group on the security services, the Special Branch and surveillance techniques such as telephone tapping.

None of this constitutes a reform movement on the scale or of the significance of police reform movements in some other countries, notably Italy's 'Nuova Polizia'. It has made no inroads into the police themselves, nor even managed to legitimate a real dialogue with the police or the other agencies. But it must be the shape of things to come, and it must be a process in which the whole of the Left — the Labour Party, the Communist Party and others — is involved, to which it must now address itself seriously, basing its views on the growing body of serious socialist writing on these subjects. If it does not do so, the dramatic force of the autonomous development of the law and order agencies can only gather further momentum during the coming recession. □

[18] *The Times* 18 April 1980.
[19] *Daily Mail* 22 Feb 1980.

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American Culture a cop out

David Edgar

I was recently privileged to spend a year in the United States, most of it in New York, courtesy of an arts fellowship scheme set up to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution. My year ran out three days after the occupation of the US Embassy compound in Tehran.

Returning for a short visit in January, the change was striking. Itsy little shops in Greenwich Village (the kind of places that disprove Marx's assertion that a commodity cannot have an exchange value without possessing a use value) were doing a brisk trade not only in Ayotollah dartboards, but also in lapel badges with slogans like 'Stand Up for America'. One could overhear, in equally itsy Upper West Side bistroteques, arty-looking types solemnly informing each other, over their spinach quiche and cheesecake, that the time had come to get over there and whip some ass. Less anecdotally, Edward Kennedy's campaign to unseat President Carter, all over bar the shouting in November, lay slowly roasting on the pyre of a re-awakened, belligerent American nationalism.

What had happened? I was not, now, in the patriotic heartland, in the conservative South or the John Wayne West. I was in *New York*, in the heart of sophisticated, radical Manhattan, the powerhouse of a culture that had, among other things, provided much of the emotional glue for the movement that had destroyed — one had hoped for all time — the pro-football tradition of American foreign policy.

The waning of radicalism

The truth, of course, is that whatever radicalism the literary and artistic culture of New York may have had in the 1960s, has now more or less drained away. There is an old aphorism to the effect that America is the only country in the world to have passed from barbarism to decadence without an intervening period of civilisation. The present metropolitan decadence of the United States has been extensively discussed. The journalist Tom Wolfe charted its growth in a famous 1976 article in which he dubbed the seventies as 'The "Me" Decade'. And the writer Christopher Lasch developed the theme in his recent book *The Culture of Narcissism*, in a trenchant (if occasionally monkish) broadside at 'the culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self', a culture in which the only injunction is 'to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity', a society peopled by individuals 'haunted not by guilt but by anxiety'.

There is evidence for Lasch's thesis wherever you look in New York: in the bookshops, where 'self-help' books with titles like *Looking After Number One* and *Winning Through Intimidation* front the display cases; at Plato's Retreat, where 'swinging singles' pay $30 for the privilege of public sex with either their dates or complete strangers; the psychiatric obsession ('the successful parent is one who raises a child who can pay for his own analysis'). The culture that grows on this medium can be energetic and vibrant, in its bravura and excess; it can also be unbearably bland and mawkish. The new American cinema contains much work of the former character. Most of the produce of the New York theatre falls into the latter category.

Broadway theatre

It took me quite a long time to work out what was odd about Broadway theatre. The truth is to be found in the newspaper listings. During my time in New York, over a twelve month period, shows opened and closed with often bewildering speed. But, at any one time, a majority of the works on offer had as

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their subject matter the entertainment industry itself. Most of the musical shows were about musical shows, whether set in the present era (*A Chorus Line, Beatlemania*), or in the past (*Sugar Babies, The 1940 Radio Hour*); if not about shows, they were about showmen, either real (*Ain't Misbehavin', Eubie*) or fictional (*They're Playing Our Song*); even the hit stage thriller (*Deathtrap*) is about a writer of hit stage thrillers; and the top comedy (*Chapter Two*) about a writer married to an actress. The huge mirrors at the back of the set of *A Chorus Line* were not there — one realised — so that the audience could look at itself. It was the show itself that had turned inwards, observing, in serious and grandiose detail, its own navel.

What I believe the American theatre is confronting is not the traditional artistic problem of what to say and how to say it, but of what should not be said and how to avoid saying it. It's not as easy as it looks. Even musicals have words and plots, and it is interesting that the greatest performance growth area in New York is dance, which has no words, and that the most popular piece of Broadway choreography is a show by Bob Fosse, titled (and consisting of) *Dancin'*, which has no plot. Verbal forms, however, have to find ways to drain their words of meaning of their plots of substance, and (like Hollywood in the 1930s) have fallen back on creating a fantasy world out of their own processes; a world with its own stories, its own characters and its own rules, which can function independently of the society around them.

Unexceptionable

There are messages, of course, or at least assumptions. The point is that they are designed to be almost impossible to disagree with. The Californian writer Joan Didion has made the point that political discussion in Hollywood tends to consist of the repetition of the incontrovertible: 'political ideas are reduced to choices between the good (equality is good) and the bad (genocide is bad)' in the context of 'the peculiar vanity of perceiving social life as a problem to be solved by the good will of individuals'. The same is eminently true of Broadway. Racial and sexual discrimination are Bad Things — a message that tends, however, to be presented in a highly mechanical, formal way (in *A Chorus Line* the dancer who loses his job by pulling his Achilles tendon is both gay and Puerto Rican, thus, as it were, crippling two minorities with one stumble). But as soon as sexism or racism (class doesn't ever come into it) becomes seen as a social rather than an individual phenomenon it is unacceptable. A Broadway musical happily titled *A Broadway Musical* closed on its first night partly because it wasn't very good, partly because (I like to think) it blew the gaffe on the content of the *rest* of Broadway, but mostly because its plot — concerning a Jewish impressario setting up an exploitative black musical — edged slightly too close to controversy. And the much discussed wave of actual black shows have been dominated by musical revues paying tribute to the individual talent of black composers and singers (Eubie Blake, Fats Waller). Finally, and most endemically of all, optimism is Good. In the musical *Annie* — the hottest ticket on Broadway for some years — the central relationship is between a 60 year old man and a 12 year old girl, so instead of half the songs being in praise of romantic love (the usual proportion), there are no less than seven songs in praise of the optimistic frame of mind. They contain lines like 'the sun will come out tomorrow' and 'you're never fully dressed without a smile'. Who can argue with such truisms. They provoke wild applause.

> But even in the cinema, there is this draining incapacity to see social events socially.

Applause is the key. Applause is to shows without content what the male ejaculation is to sex without passion. It is the only reason for being there. At £12 for an orchestra seat, one can see why audiences want to convince themselves they've had a good time. But there is something forced, something desperate about applause in the American theatre (Stephen Sondheim has seen to it in his musical *Sweeney Todd* that neither the first nor the last entrances of his principal characters contains any musical or dramatic cue for applause; never mind, the audience is determined to applaud anyway, and comes near to forcing the orchestra to stop playing). This type of applause is, I believe, a relieved, collective 'thank you' for an evening without controversy, an evening of shared enthusiasm for unarguable sentiment, an evening during which it has been possible to believe that the sun will indeed come out tomorrow. Anything which provokes, anything which *divides* the audience (the effect Brecht strove so hard for) would disrupt that final moment of communal release.

The cinema

Not all American verbal performance is like the American theatre. The cinema, as we know, is vibrant and often serious. While I was in America, there were two New York shows about the Vietnam experience: one was a crude, cabaret version of Michael Herr's documentary book *Despatches*, the other was a dreary, tiresome and often offensive play about sexual relations between American troops and an old Vietnamese woman. During the same period, of course, there were a clutch of important and serious films about that experience: *Coming Home, Dog Soldiers, Apocalypse Now* and *The Deer Hunter*. There was also a film which intervened even more directly into the mainstream of American political life: *The China Syndrome*, with its chillingly prescient representation of the kind of nuclear crisis that was to happen, for real, at Harrisburg.

But even in the cinema, there is this draining incapacity to see social events socially. Every one of those five movies has at its centre a classical American hero (or, in one case, heroine), out of odds with the world around him/her, superior and heroic by virtue of his/her distance from the vulgar mob. The most striking, perhaps, is the character played by Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse Now*, constantly gazing in wide-eyed alarm at the behaviour of the yahoo-like private soldiers around him; most saddening is the cheap parody of the anti-nuclear campaign in *The China Syndrome:* we are to be protected from mass radiation, apparently, not by a mass movement but by the individual efforts of crusading journalists played by Jane Fonda.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that artists and writers tend to overestimate culture as a symptom or even a cause of the state of nations. But it does seem that there is a connection between a society in which the theatrical arts resolutely refuse to see any social content in contemporary events — either through a philosophy of rampant individualism or through the rejection of politics altogether — and a country which may, only eight years after its defeat in Vietnam, elect the most belligerent, the most mindlessly imperialist Presidential candidate since Barry Goldwater. American culture has copped out of history; and it is a warning to those of us concerned with our own culture here. □

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Discussion

Eurocommunism can it regain the initiative?

Manuel Azcarate

I agree with many of the points made by Göran Therborn in his article about Eurocommunism which was published in the April issue of *Marxism Today*. In particular, I consider it a very stimulating article and one which impels us to think about various topics touched on.

The comments I am making here are not fully worked out and finalised. They are rather in the nature of hypotheses, projects on which I am working.

1. It is evident that the political framework within which the term 'Eurocommunism' was first used has undergone a profound change. It is perhaps appropriate to draw attention to the following three aspects of that change which has taken place in the past five years:

(a) The failure of the Left in France. I am not referring just to the electoral defeat in itself but to the sorry spectacle which was then presented to us of lack of will to complete a project for socialist transformation which had already had profound repercussions, not only in France, but also in other European countries. It is clear that on a European scale capitalism, the Right, was strengthened and considerably encouraged by that sad experience in France.

(b) The extreme gravity of the economic crisis, with today's terrible figures for unemployment etc. More than that, there is the actual character of the crisis, which is not only economic, but political, ideological and moral, a real crisis of civilisation and one which confronts us with the need to combine the struggle for the solution of urgent, pressing problems with the need to go on working out a new model for economic development — one capable of changing the structures that have brought about the crisis.

(c) The worsening of the international situation, with virtually the end of détente and the beginning of a kind of 'cold war', the threat of armed conflicts on a still bigger scale than those that have occurred since the end of the Second World War. At the same time, a brutal speeding up of the arms race, especially as regards nuclear weapons. All of which places the problems of peace, détente, disarmament in a central position which they did not occupy when the word Eurocommunism became fashionable.

New features of the Right

In actual fact, today the forces of the working class, and of the people, have to face a new economic and political threat from the Right, and not only within the confines of a number of European countries, for the phenomenon has assumed international proportions. And the problem is to examine what are the new features of the reactionary Right at the present stage, and what are the weaknesses of the Left which may assist the manoeuvres of the Right, and to do that so as thereby to work out more successfully a strategy for progress.

In my opinion it is important to remember that the present upsurge of the Right is taking place following the failures and the inadequacies of the 'welfare state'. At the stage of what we might call the Keynesian state, with its increasing intervention in the economy, the bourgeois state itself considerably increased its capacity — both its coercive capacity and its ideological capacity. The instruments of force are of unprecedented magnitude. The factor of alienation of the masses which the state represents has increased to an equal extent. The combination of the state and the big financial and economic groupings, and above all the multinational concerns, creates a kind of objective tendency towards the right, towards the restriction and also the suppression of liberties, of human rights, of democracy in the deepest meaning of the word.

At the same time, while the Right is using these growing powers of the state in the various fields, it is presenting itself before the masses under the banner of all that is *private*, under the banner of freedom, of liberalism in the broad sense, of limiting an invasion by the state into the spheres of personal life. This is perhaps the aspect to which least thought has been given. Among the broad masses, certainly among the middle strata, but also among the working people, there is a very widespread feeling against the excessive weight exerted by the state on society as a whole. There is the burden of taxation of various kinds, but there are also many other spheres of civic and cultural life in which people feel themselves to be more and more restricted, structured, coerced by the tentacles of the state. This reaction against the state is not necessarily reactionary. It would be a very serious matter if the Right-Left dilemma were to present itself in terms of a greater or lesser role for the state in society. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that to some extent the Right has been able to exploit this.

A third aspect is the deep roots in people's mentality, in their ideology, struck by such traditional conceptions as law and order, the family, the motherland, morality, etc, which are exploited by the Right in face of a sharpening of the political struggle, of the class struggle, of the presence, for instance, of the trade unions in economic life. In many cases, the tendency on the part of the forces of the Left to confine themselves to exclusively political problems (in the narrow sense of the term) has left in the hands of the Right genuine problems and real concern felt by sections of the population.

In any case, the most important factor which enables the Right to obtain successes in the present circumstances is the division among the forces of the Left, the division between socialists and communists, the absence of a left-wing alternative to the present crisis, of a political project able to unify the aspirations and the objective needs of the great masses of the working class and the people in Western Europe at the present time. Is it possible to create an alternative of this kind, not in the sense of a written programme, but of an ongoing political reality? I believe that it is possible to do this, but it poses in advance a series of very grave problems, and it demands considerable effort both in thought and in action.

The necessity of Eurocommunism

2. In face of the new political set-up in which we find ourselves (some of the features of which I have already outlined above), it is my belief that Eurocommunism is today even more necessary, if that were possible, than it ever was. If the Eurocommunist trend did not exist, it would be absolutely necessary to invent it now, for in face of these new problems with which we are confronted, the solutions offered by the traditional communist political culture are of no avail.

Yet those traditional conceptions are still strong; they have roots and it is hard to escape from their influence. One of the main causes of the difficulties which Eurocommunism and, I would say, in more general terms, the Left in Europe, is now experiencing, is the stultifying influence still exerted by the system of military blocs, the bipolarity [the situation created by two opposite poles-trans]

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into which international life has become structured since the Second World War.

It is precisely the worsening of the international situation, and the threats of war, which are giving new life to traditional conceptions and exert pressure in the direction of a return to the idea of the world as consisting of two camps, that of the goodies and that of the baddies, and to the idea that, therefore, in order to fight imperialism, there is nothing for it but to take one's stand in the camp of the Soviet Union.

Because of this, one of the prime needs of Eurocommunism is to settle accounts with the idea of the two camps. The trouble is that this idea does not permit us to grasp, to understand the world of today: the forces of socialism are not confined to the military bloc headed by the Soviet Union, nor are the forces of capitalism exclusively those represented by NATO; if we see things through the spectacles of the 'two camps', some of the most dynamic and decisive historical trends in the present epoch, such as the non-aligned movement, will remain outside our field of vision.

Because of this, a strategy capable of ensuring that the working class of Western Europe plays a role in the present epoch makes it necessary to set out from a *third position:* against imperialism, naturally, but at the same time outside the military bloc 'hegemonised' by the Soviet Union.

The third position

In this connection there arises the problem of Europe, one which is particularly difficult for the Left in Britain. In the crisis of 'bipolarity' through which we are living, a new tendency is taking shape in Western Europe, directed towards a greater autonomy, towards distancing oneself from the United States, towards playing a role of one's own, a European role, in international problems, not subordinate to Washington. This tendency has objective roots, and for that reason it is also reflected in the policy of some bourgeois governments. What attitude should the Left adopt towards it? My opinion is that the European Left should aim to be the hegemonic force in this new role which Western Europe can play, contributing in that way towards overcoming the bipolar system, towards promoting a new system of international relations, a 'pluripolar' one, in which the small and medium-sized countries can play a greater role; in which China can occupy the fundamental place due to her in the international community; in which the role of the United Nations can grow, not just as a discussion centre, but as an instrument for solving, in a more democratic way, international conflicts etc.

The keystone of a Eurocommunist strategy on international questions, in favour of peace, disarmament, détente etc, may perhaps be the struggle for an alliance between the working class and progressive forces of Western Europe and the revolutionary forces of the Third World. Such an alliance is not an easy problem, for it is not a matter of drawing up more or less enthusiastic declarations of solidarity. It is the key problem in a real struggle for a new international order, that is to say, a new international distribution of labour; a new conception of the relations between the industrialised world and the world which is in the process of development. This alliance has to orientate itself also in relation to the struggle for a new quality of life, a new system of consumption for the working people of the industrialised world. But there is no real solution to the problem of peace unless progress is made towards closing the terrible gulf which today separates the immense majority of humankind, condemned to intolerable living conditions, from the more developed part of the world. The initiative, the solutions for setting this profound change in motion, must be undertaken by the revolutionary forces, and in the first place by the working class. The historical necessity for Eurocommunism, its reason for existence, lies to a great extent in the necessity for tackling that problem *now*, in this period of history.

The problems of Eurocommunism

3. The other package of problems which the present state of affairs places in the forefront for Eurocommunism concerns revolutionary strategy. To see in Eurocommunism simply the idea that the taking of power should be brought about by an electoral and parliamentary process, instead of by insurrection, without changing the rest of the traditional political set-up, is not only a caricature, but is in direct contradiction with the new demands which objective reality poses for a policy really directed towards a socialist transformation of society. I agree with Göran Therborn that a serious weakness in presenting the Eurocommunist case in the initial period lay in the undue weight given to the utilisation of electoral and parliamentary procedures. Not because those procedures are secondary or are to be despised — on the contrary, they are, in my opinion, fundamental, decisive, but on condition that they are placed in the framework of a more general conception, capable of imparting dynamism and strength to other equally essential areas of revolutionary strategy.

I shall confine my remarks to three aspects to which I believe much greater effort should be devoted, both in terms of theoretical thinking and political concern.

In the first place it is becoming increasingly unsatisfactory to approach the Soviet Union's mistakes in international politics while separating them from, placing them outside, an analysis of what the system called 'real socialism', the Soviet system, actually signifies. As if we felt a kind of bashfulness, a sense of taboo, preventing us from saying clearly what we think about the system of power which operates in the Soviet Union.

My experience, for instance, is that criticism and condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in order to be understood, must on every occasion be accompanied by that effort to analyse the nature of the Soviet state. It is necessary to recognise, and to say, that in the Soviet Union the working class does not exercise the leading role in society; that the trade unions are, in the main, instruments of the state; that elections with majorities of more than 99% in electing MPs are a farce and do not permit the masses, the people, to exercise an influence on the country's policy; and that in consequence the centre of decision-making, power in the Soviet Union, is in the hands of a very restricted group of persons who run the country by bureaucratic and authoritarian methods. I am confining myself to indicating a few features of a set of problems which are much wider and more complex; my sole intention here is to emphasise the *necessity* for a Marxist critique of the state and of Soviet society, side by side with the development of a policy of total independence in relation to the Soviet Union's international policy.

Political parties in crisis

Secondly, Eurocommunism, at the same time as it reaffirms with the utmost clarity its support for democracy, its respect for political and cultural liberties, its pluralist conception of socialism, needs to tackle boldly all the questions of the present crisis of the capitalist state, and not only the state; I believe that the crisis of the traditional conception of the political parties in a real crisis, and I am referring as much to the social-democratic conception of the electoral party as to the Leninist conception of the party as a restricted nucleus of professional revolutionaries which transforms itself into the architect of the transformation of society.

The present crisis has opened up new contradictions in capitalism and has given rise to phenomena which place sections of the population in opposition to capitalism, but these tendencies, in a number of cases, are not finding expression through the political parties; they are bringing about the birth of new social movements. The most decisive

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phenomenon in this sphere is undoubtedly present-day feminism. But there are others, such as ecology, youth, the new role of culture etc. We are finding ourselves, therefore, in the theatre of the anti-capitalist struggle, with a greater wealth of subject matter. I do not in the least share the ideas of those who talk about the disappearance of political parties, because they regard the social movements as the exclusive subject matter for revolution. On the contrary, the role of the parties may probably increase, become enriched precisely by the greater breadth of the tendencies in society which clash with the capitalist structures. But this poses a great variety of problems which up to the present have only been analysed to a very small extent. In my opinion, among present-day Marxists Pietro Ingrao is the one who has gone furthest in studying this series of problems. It is a question of how to raise the level of internal democracy in the political parties and make them more straightforward and open; of ensuring that they are capable of undertaking their electoral and parliamentary role, without doubt, but of voicing at the same time the questions and day-to-day concerns of the masses, helping to ensure that the masses take into their own hands to an ever greater extent the solution of their problems, or the struggle for that solution.

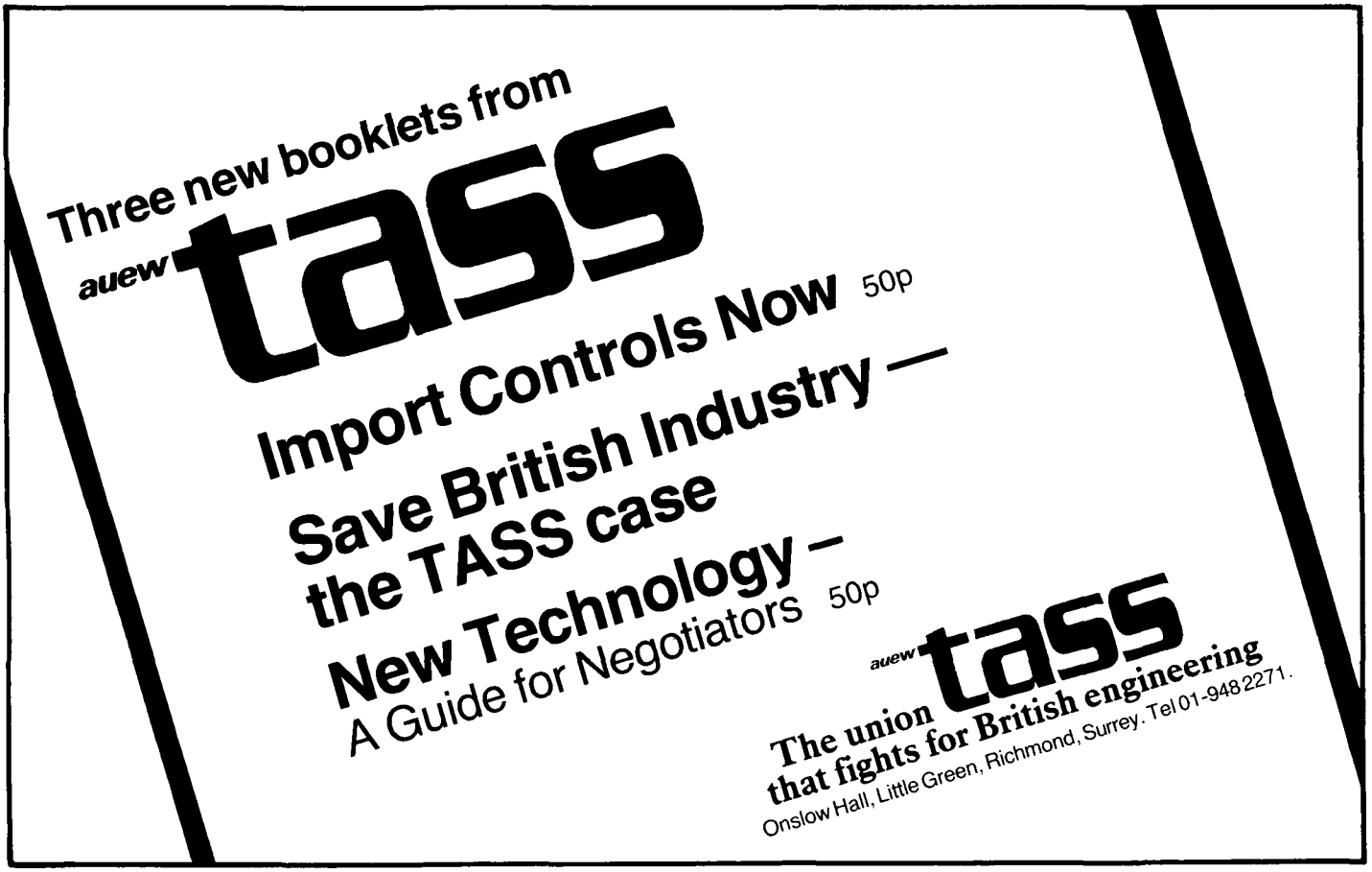
We are at a contradictory stage in which, side by side with obvious tendencies to abstention in elections, there is, in the broad masses of society, a desire for participation. What is needed is in some way to invent a new form of conducting politics, one which, without eliminating, I repeat, the electoral aspect, places it in the context of a much wider and richer vision of the roads along which the working people, the masses, can make themselves masters of their country.

The problem of the state

These questions are linked with the necessity for a much more profound Marxist analysis of the problem of the state and of the actual content of a socialist revolution in the present epoch. I believe that to think of the revolution as the taking of central power, by an electoral road, in place of the traditional conception of the path of insurrection, is not enough. It is a question, not of denying the decisive character of the taking of power, but certainly of combining it with the conception of the hegemony of the new social bloc, led by the working class, in society — a conception which Gramsci was the first to formulate. In this connection we in Spain, at the present time, are undergoing an experience which is particularly important, because the new constitution, following the disappearance of the dictatorship, in addition to re-establishing political liberties, establishes the framework of a state with autonomies, which is not simply an administrative de-centralisation, but is leading to the creation of new centres of political power, with an important level of competence in the various nationalities and regions that make up Spain.

This problem of decentralising the state, of creating new centres of decision-making, is, in my opinion, acquiring considerable importance in the context of the series of problems posed by the crisis of the modern state and by the advance towards a revolution of the majority, along a democratic road to a pluralist socialism.

In the third place there is the problem of the relationship with the socialists and social democrats. It is probable that the conception of social democracy as being the consequence of a 'labour aristocracy' raised up on the super-profits obtained from colonial exploitation, does not allow us nowadays to recognise reality. In actual fact, the capitalist system itself, through the way in which it functions in the economic sphere and through the ideology which it engenders, tends to give rise, not to one attitude, but to two among the working class: one of them directed towards the reform of the system without calling into question its very nature;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the other, genuinely revolutionary, which aims to destroy capitalist alienation and, on that basis, all forms of alienation, and which, because of this, is steering a course towards communism.

The existence, therefore, of two trends within the working class is a consequence of the very characteristics of the capitalist system. And the problem is to examine today what can be the consequences, in this sphere, of the crisis through which we are living, of the experiences of the recent period in which, in a large part of Europe, socialists and social democrats have been governing, with the hope of a 'new capitalism' which was going to ensure full employment and abundance, and which has led to the present situation of unemployment, want, inflation etc. Because of this, I am optimistic, in spite of the grave conflicts which exist in a number of countries between communists and socialists; I am convinced that in the medium and long term, and setting out from points of agreement which can undoubtedly be found for joint action, the project of a left alternative to the crisis, on the one hand to avoid war and preserve peace, and on the other to tackle a new form of transforming society in a socialist direction, can be the fruit of the struggle of Eurocommunism and of the progressive tendencies which are manifesting themselves in a series of socialist and social-democratic parties in Western Europe.

In conclusion

To sum up, I regard it as a fact that big difficulties are confronting Eurocommunism at the present time.The solution to those difficulties, however, does not lie along the path of restricting its content, of shutting oneself up in a policy dictated by transient circumstances, of retreating before the pressure which remnants of the past may exert on the present. I believe, on the contrary, that Eurocommunism needs to tackle boldly a series of new problems which the very development of the productive forces is placing on the agenda. Eurocommunist thinking will, I am convinced, take us further and further away from social democracy, but also from the 'Soviet model', from the dogmatic conceptions of traditional communism. And it will lead us to the quest for, and the charting of, a road that is truly revolutionary, and not only in words — towards a revolution of the majority able to carry out a profound transformation of present-day society, to outline socialist solutions adequate for the last part of the 20th century in which we are living.

Translated by A M Elliott

More Bad News

Greg Philo, John Hewitt and Pete Beharrell

Ian Connell's review of *More Bad News* (August 1980 *Marxism Today*) was extremely good news for the conservative apologists of broadcasting. A short while ago, at a conference, a very senior BBC executive commented to us how much he approved of the work of some contemporary Marxists. He named a well known author whose work had 'conclusively demonstrated that the BBC accurately reflected the existing social structure'. The executive thought that this was of course what the BBC should be doing. It is hard to combat such misrepresentations — and it becomes even harder when Marxists such as Ian Connell blandly assert that television news 'accurately reproduced . . . the structure of the debate between the various political and economical forces'. Such an assertion rather misses the point that ruling groups do attempt to manipulate ideas to their own advantage. The development of the corporate state clearly involves the tacit consent of at least some sections of the

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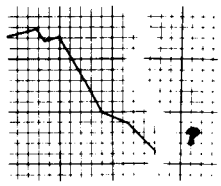

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working class and their leadership. But the securing of this consent and the winning of hegemony is a constant struggle and manipulation is one facet of this. One of the gains of our particular form of social democracy is that public broadcasting is not supposed to be subject to such manipulation — it is supposed to be accurate and balanced. When trade unionists are shown evidence of manipulation, they get very annoyed — which is why our work has been used by unions and political groups who are trying to change the media. But to argue with Ian Connell that the broadcasting system 'did accurately reproduce a real political and ideological balance of forces', is simply to invite acquiescence. Actually, these forces were reproduced in a totally unbalanced and inaccurate fashion. There was enormous contention over the policies of the last Labour Governemnt, and there were major policy splits in both the TUC and the Labour Party. But the rationale and logic of the Left case was never given on the news. It is simply not true to say that the arguments and evidence which informed this opposition were featured in routine news coverage. In discussing such 'splits' the role of the media is to re-work and re-establish the dominant view and to isolate those responsible for the 'disruption'. In doing this, as we showed in our work, the broadcasters violate two critical principles.

Firstly, they do not reflect the existing range of views in a balanced fashion. They neglect whole areas of opinion — upgrade some and downgrade others. As we show in the case studies, new areas of 'chosen' political and economic opinion were actually sold to the people, and coverage was organised to legitimise these political views. In other words, even within the range of 'sanctioned' social democratic debates, the broadcasters are clearly very choosy.

Secondly, by seeking to process information within what they take to be the consensual view they violate their own canons of accuracy and impartiality. There are a range of arguments about how the economy and society work, which cannot be resolved merely by an appeal to what most people think. Their resolution clearly depends on empirical evidence, for example, on whether wages really are ahead of prices and if they are, does this mean they are causing inflation. The manipulation of information to 'fit' a dominant view cannot be justified by saying that this view is held by a lot of 'important' people.

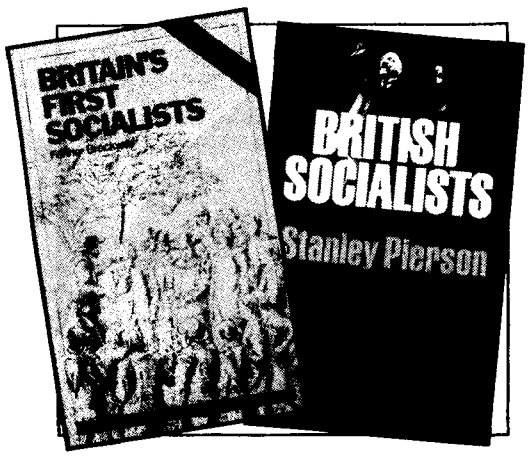
These violations provide the ground for opposition to the existing structure. The present struggles of media workers inside the institutions and of all the other groups outside, are critically informed by evidence such as we provide in *More Bad News*. What does Ian Connell suggest we all do instead? Are we simply to abandon those struggles until someone decides that the balance of political and economic forces are at the correct conjunctural moment for us to mount an ideological offensive? Ian actually advises us that what we should have done is 'take on the task of producing an understanding of the precise form of reproducing' — if only we had known.

Reviews

BRITISH SOCIALISTS
Stanley Pierson
Harvard University Press

BRITAIN'S FIRST SOCIALISTS
Fenner Brockway
Quartet Books £5.95

These two books deal with events separated in time by almost 250 years and emphasise that the price for social and political advance is a continuous struggle. For many of the demands for which Cromwell's New Model Army, and especially the Agitators and Levellers within it, fought (the subject of Brockway's book) in the seventeenth century, were not only not won by the socialists in the nineteenth century (the subject of Pierson's book) but still remain to be won today.



The English bourgeois Revolution, itself a most important episode in the fight for democracy in Britain, and the movements to extend it further — those of the Agitators, Levellers and later, Diggers — have been brilliantly described and analysed from left-wing and Marxist standpoints in the monumental books of H N Brailsford and Christopher Hill. Fenner Brockway's major aim in producing yet 'another book' on the subject is not only to provide 'a concise and straightforward account' for the general reader but, above all, to establish the credentials of the Agitators, Levellers and Diggers as 'the initiators of democratic socialist principles'.

What emerges from his most living and readable account is the great contribution that was made during the course of this fine struggle to the theory and practice of political democracy in general and in Britain in particular.

The first 'shop stewards' of ordinary soldiers — the Agitators — were delegates elected on a regimental basis in Cromwell's army. These became a formidable force compelling the top army generals to discuss with them not only their immediate grievances (delay in payment of wage arrears, opposition to service in Ireland), but deeper questions such as (amongst others) the future political shape of Britain and whether 'the poorest he' would enjoy equal rights with 'the greatest he' in Parliamentary elections, as happened in the famous Putney Debates in October 1647.

The Levellers were the first political movement of modern times. They produced a kind of 'British Road' to Political Democracy, really a (much re-drafted) outline of a democratic Constitution called 'An Agreement of the People for a firm, and present peace on the grounds of Common Right'. This included — two centuries before Chartism — demands for democratic electoral reform, Manhood Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, abolition of property qualifications, as well as far-reaching demands for equality before the law, religious toleration, abolition of a state church and of tithes, trial by jury, abolition of the Privy Council and other central courts, the election of sheriffs and justices of the peace and many more.

The Diggers sought to make a reality of 'common ownership' by occupying uncultivated waste and common lands, working them in common and sharing the fruits of their common labour. With Cromwell's turn to reaction and dictatorship, death and the restoration of the Monarchy, all these inspiring movements were finally crushed. But they left living relics.

Brockway argues strongly in favour of the correctness of proclaiming the Agitators, Levellers and Diggers as the 'first Socialists'.

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For all their great merits, this estimate would seem to me to be incorrect. They were involved in the first stages of a bourgeois revolution, and an incomplete one at that. They lived before the development of modern industrial capitalism and of the industrial working class. They were mainly small farmers, traders and skilled craftsmen. They fought for advanced democratic aims but not for a society organised on the basis of the principles of Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution.

To be sure, we have inherited from them the understanding of the importance of democracy and incorporated it into our conception of the advace to *socialism*. But they did not, and could not, given the time they lived in.

Pierson's book deals with the politcial organisations of the Labour movement which either called themselves socialist or had socialist aims. He divides them into three — the Social-Democrats, by which he means the Marxist organisations (the Social-Democratic Federation, the Socialist Labour Party, the British Socialist Party and the Communist Party); then the Ethical Socialists, by which he means the Independent Labour Party; and finally, the Fabians — and examines their development above all in terms of their relations with the Labour Party.

He does this largely by discussing some of their outstanding, individual figures — 'those who served as organisers and propagandists', those who formulated and expounded their respective ideologies.

This method, while providing interesting slants on the early socialist movement, when added to his view of the general background on which British socialists developed as well as to his estimate of the Labour Party and the dilemmas he asserts it created for the socialist organisations, adds up to a strange and confused picture.

He ascribes a specially important role in the development of early socialism here to people with a 'divided consciousness'. These were young, mainly of lower middle class origin, who, revolted by the gross, materialist society of the 80s and 90s and by their own soul-destroying and dismal lives, looked for some movement or body of ideas which would point the way to a new, more humane and perfect society.

These represented the utopian, 'visionary' element in the socialist movement which found further expression in the outlook of the Ethical Socialists of the ILP who sought to combine socialism with christian belief. The other element was the 'practical' one, reflected in the trade unions whose leaders were -- and remain — non-socialist and the Labour Party which they created and which Pierson asserts they dominated. His whole argument is that these two elements are incompatible and that this incompatibility is the root cause of the weakness of the individual socialist organisations and of the socialist movement in general in Britain.

'. . . separated from . . . immediate practical concerns, the socialist visionaries lost their strength. But insofar as the socialists concentrated on the advance of trade union interests, they cut themselves off from the deeper inspiration of the movement'.

His argument has contemporary relevance but not in the form he describes. The 'contradiction' arose from the conditions in which British socialism developed. In the 1880s and 1890s, socialist ideas were the property of only a tiny minority and amongst these, and the early socialist organisations themselves, conceptions about the nature of a socialist society, a strategy to achieve it and the features and tasks of a genuine socialist party were extremely vague.

The idea that capitalism would 'collapse' and the workers 'take over' became fairly widely accepted as the movement developed. Thus propaganda to 'convert' people to a visonary socialism became widespread, particularly on the part of the ILP. The Social Democratic Federation, Socialist League and Socialist Labour Party, on the other hand, sought to win people for Marxist ideas in their different ways, although a Marxism of a somewhat mechanical kind. These three latter organisations, however, were fiercely opposed to struggle for immediate demands which they castigated as 'palliatives' and 'diversions'. With the establishment of the Communist Party, both propaganda for socialist ideas and maximum participation in the day to day struggles of the working class and working people, are seen as two essential sides of the work of a revolutionary Marxist party. True, the degree to which both aspects are undertaken presents problems, and a struggle — not always successful — has to be waged against over-concentration on either one or the other.

Today, the major contradiction is not between 'utopianism' and 'practicalism' in the labour movement but between the Fabian and right wing ideas of the 'gang of three' and other right wing forces in the labour movement on the one hand, and the alternative ideas and practice of the Labour Left and other sections of the socialist Left on the other.

Finally, a protest against the way William Morris is treated in Pierson's book. His great contribution to the early development of the socialist movement is almost totally ignored and where he is mentioned he is bracketed with John Ruskin as embodying the aesthetic, artistic and visionary approach to socialism.

Nowhere does Pierson number Morris amongst the early Marxists, refer in depth to the Socialist League and his role in it or to his tireless political activity as propagandist, lecturer, writer and seller of the League's paper. This is — as Robin Page Arnot says — part of the myth built up about Morris by those who wanted to discredit Marxism.

Jack Cohen

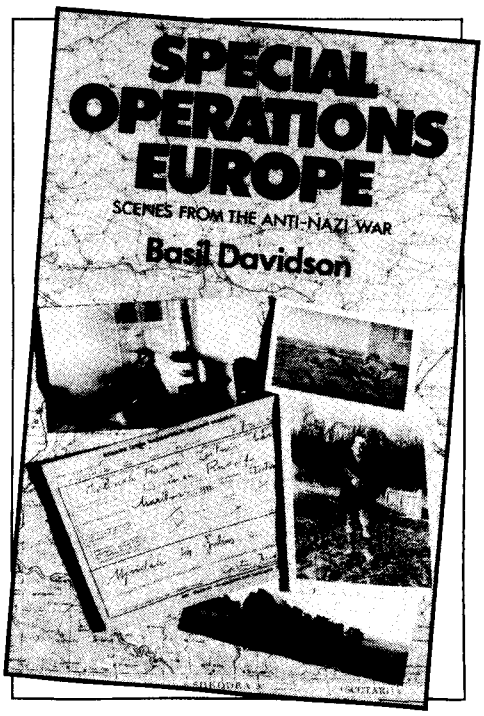
SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE: SCENES FROM THE ANTI-NAZI WAR

Basil Davidson

Victor Gollancz 1980 288 pp £8.50.

History is both 'past politics' and very much current politics, too, in this autobiography of a World War II British agent, which will be as evocative for the old as it is educational for young readers.

The author was an officer in the Special Operations Executive set up to promote resistance 'in countries overrun or overawed by the Nazis'. He operated throughout the war — in Hungary, at the SOE base in Cairo, in Yugoslavia and in Italy. His story is highly personalised, cinematic in its to-ing and fro-ing over the years, but firmly held together by the themes it develops. It gives a deeply moving account of the genesis of people's armed resistance under Communist leadership. One puts the book down with two main impressions. The first is how much of what we had all learned by 1945 has been



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distorted, or simply buried, by the long cold war years. The second is that while thousands of more specialised studies since have so often used the trees to conceal the wood, here the whole dark forest stands illuminated.

The first concealment has been the hope of 1945. By that blood-soaked year, the genie was getting out of the bottle all over Europe: popular governments stemming from the resistance experience, the outlawing of fascism and the resumption of progress, with no more war to come, were all widely assumed to be the shape of the future.

The politics of armed resistance, as Davidson shows, everywhere grew into the politics of radical democracy. Into this picture he also fits a brilliant cameo of one of the more extraordinary 'scenes' of the war, one that was offside from the fighting resistance movements but politically entirely kin to them.

This was the Cairo Forces Parliament, the meteoric outbreak of democracy and people's politics in the British forces in the Middle East (with a similar event in India) which startled the brasshats out of their wits and presaged the electoral overthrow of Toryism after the war, despite Churchill and what he had seemed to stand for.

One could argue that Davidson's view of the Communist successes in leading partisan struggles as a kind of first rejection of Stalinist bureaucratic/dictatorial conceptions, and the root of today's 'Eurocommunist' trends, is simplistic in its presentation.

But certainly changes in this direction were under way before the Western-launched cold war in 1946 and the responding Cominform break with Tito in 1948 slammed them into reverse and strangled the changes almost at birth.

One of the great merits of the book is its demonstration that this alteration was seeded continuously during the war itself. Davidson zeroes in close on the Cairo-based reactionary intrigues that secured — up to and beyond the last defensible moment — that British aid went exclusively to the royal Yugoslav government representative in Yugoslavia Draza Mihajlovic, whose chetniks refused to fight the nazis, would fight only the Communist-led partisans, and above all aimed at emerging intact after the war to retain control for the socially conservative forces.

A note from SOE Balkan chief Lord Glenconner for July 1942, quoted by Davidson, said: 'As we know, any activities in Yugoslavia should really be attributed to the partisans. But for public consumption we can see no harm in a certain amount of this going to the credit of Mihajlovic'.

When Davidson was appointed G2 of the operational section for Yugoslavia, he recalls, 'I was given not one word of advice or information about the partisans. So far as we were concerned, they were supposed not to exist'.

His story of how the Italian partisans saved Genoa from Nazi scorched-earth plans, despite British and American top-level efforts to pretend that they, too, scarcely existed, and to ensure that they disappared as rapidly as possible, shows the same policy at work. It failed in Yugoslavia but succeeded in Italy, choking a budding new Italian *risorgimento* and laying the basis for three decades of unbroken Christian Democrat one-party rule in the interests of big capital.

Almost a 'scene' to himself in this richly thoughtful memoir is occupied by the figure of the late James Klugmann, this journal's former editor for many years, and the subject of fascinating pages of tribute to his role and his comments on all the Cairo intrigues and their long-term implications.

'James', as he appears already then to have been generally known, gets a wonderfully life-like pen portrait. He emerges constantly as lecturer, counsellor, friend and general guru of the forces of light amid the Cairo murk of those days.

Stanley Harrison

NOTES

MARXISM TODAY ON THE INCREASE

Paul Webster writes: This month *Marxism Today* celebrates the first anniversary of its new format. During the past year, important gains have been made in the circulation of the journal, and monthly sales are now consistently over 500 higher than they were a year ago. While this particular issue will be an all-time record — with a print run of 10,000.

The subscription offer introduced earlier this year was particularly successful, and home subscriptions have increased by over 200 since last October. The leaflet announcing the offer has been used widely throughout the labour and progressive movement, with particular effect at trade union conferences. Two people were each able to win 10 new subscribers at the AUEW TASS and NGA annual conferences respectively, and a number of delegates at the recent TUC in Brighton were involved in widening our readership among trade unionists.

Marxism Today is now sold in greater numbers at a wider range of bookshops than ever before. Our sales have more than doubled in this area. It is also sold for the first time through newsagents, although as yet this is limited to central London. Readers can help in this respect by writing to the editorial office with suggestions of newsagents in their locality which they consider suitable for the sale of *Marxism Today*.

We have recently embarked on a campaign to increase the circulation to Communist Party members directly though the branches. *Marxism Today* is the theoretical journal of the Party — it contributes much to discussion within the Party, and draws much of its material from Party members. To ensure that this relationship is maintained and developed, it is crucial that *Marxism Today* is widely read and used throughout the Party.

Marxism Today has a growing reputation on the Left as a journal of political analysis — this must be reflected in a continually growing readership. Over the past year, it has provided the most exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon of Thatcherism and the fightback to appear in the pages of the Left's theoretical press; if the lessons of this debate are to be used in practical political activity, then the circulation of the journal must increase and more people must be drawn into discussion. For a journal with limited resources, you, the readers, are a vital element in this process. Help us to sustain the improvements made over the last year by doing everything possible to win new, regular readers of *Marxism Today*.

Contributions to *Notes* (brief please) are welcome. We need copy before the 1st of the month preceding publication.

JACK WODDIS

As we went to press, we heard of the death of Jack Woddis. Jack was the Head of the International Department of the Communist Party and a regular and long-standing contributor to *Marxism Today*. He wrote on a very wide range of issues — from Third World questions to problems of political strategy in Britain. His output was immense and impressive. Jack's death has robbed the Communist Party, the British Left and the international communist movement of an outstanding political leader, thinker and writer. For *Marxism Today*, he was a constant source of advice, help and encouragement. He will be deeply missed.

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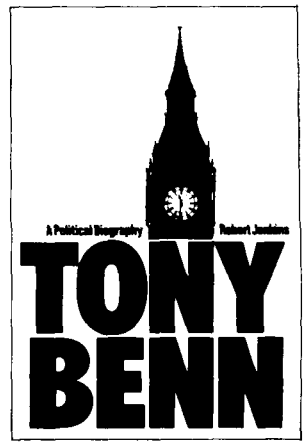

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